DELPHI CLASSICS

Dante Alighieri

Complete Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

DELPHI POETS SERIES

DANTE ALIGHIERI

(1265-1321)

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DANTE: HIS TIMES AND HIS WORK by Arthur John Butler

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Version 1

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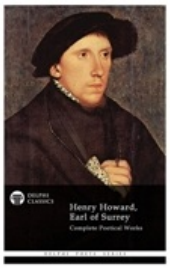

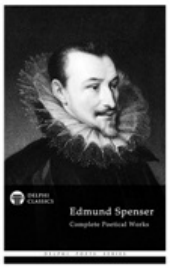

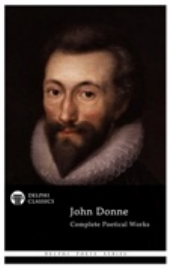

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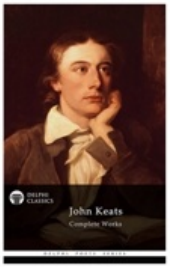

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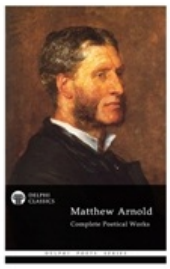

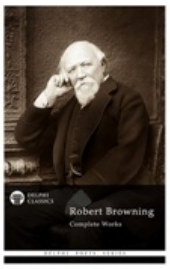

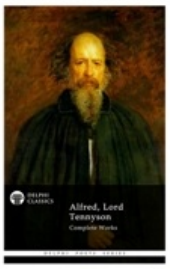

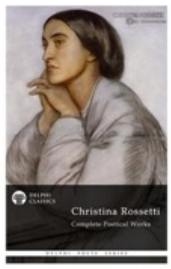

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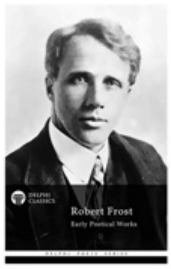

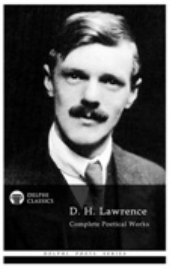

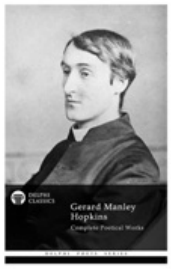

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DELPHI POETS SERIES

DANTE ALIGHIERI

By Delphi Classics, 2012

NOTE

When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The Poetry Collections

Dante's birthplace, Florence

Medieval Florence by Giorgio Vasari

Florence today

THE NEW LIFE

Translated by Charles Eliot Norton

La Vita Nuova is a collection of verse and prose works written in 1295 by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Forming an expression of the medieval genre of courtly love, the collection was innovative for being written in Italian, instead of Latin – the favoured language of high literature at the time. As well as the poet's other works, *La Vita Nuova* helped to establish the Tuscan dialect, promoting an Italian language that could be appreciated by readers of all backgrounds and not just the privileged few.

The work contains 42 short chapters, with commentaries on 25 sonnets and several other rarer forms of poems. In the prose sections, Dante constructs a narrative of sorts between the poems; recounting his encounters with Beatrice, a young Florentine maiden he meets and falls in love with at first sight. As the poet discusses the origins and context of each poem, he also explains, often in meticulous detail, his technical decisions in composition. The chapters containing poems are composed of three parts: the semi-autobiographical narrative, the lyric that resulted from those circumstances and a brief structural outline of the lyric.

La Vita Nuova was written with the purpose to elevate courtly love poetry, transposing its tropes and its language into a sacred form of love poetry. The collection is a landmark work in the development of emotional autobiography, finely delineating feelings of courtly love, as well as presenting an unprecedented insight of a poet's workmanship.

A portrait of Dante attributed to Giotto

‘Dante meets Beatrice at the Santa Trinita bridge’, by Henry Holiday, 1883

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A scene from the poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1871

I.

IN that part of the book of my memory before which little can be read is found a rubric which says: *Incipit Vita Nova* [The New Life begins]. Under which rubric I find the words written which it is my intention to copy into this little book, — and if not all of them, at least their meaning.

II.

Nine times now, since my birth, the heaven of light had turned almost to the same point in its own gyration, when the glorious Lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who knew not what to call her, first appeared before my eyes. She had already been in this life so long that in its course the starry heaven had moved toward the region of the East one of the twelve parts of a degree; so that at about the beginning of her ninth year she appeared to me, and I near the end of my ninth year saw her. She appeared to me clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson, and she was girt and adorned in such wise as befitted her very youthful age. At that instant, I say truly that the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and, trembling, said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi* [Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me].

At that instant the spirit of the soul, which dwells in the high chamber to which all the spirits of the senses carry their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, speaking especially to the spirit of the sight, said these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra* [Now has appeared your bliss].

At that instant the natural spirit, which dwells in that part where our nourishment is supplied, began to weep, and, weeping, said these words: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps* [Woe is me, wretched! because often from this time forth shall I be hindered]. I say that from that time forward Love lorded it over my soul, which had been so speedily wedded to him: and he began to exercise over me such control and such lordship, through the power which my imagination gave to him, that it behoved me to do completely all his pleasure. He commanded me ofttimes that I should seek to see this youthful angel; so that I in my boyhood often went seeking her, and saw her of such noble and praiseworthy deportment, that truly of her might be said that word of the poet Homer, “She seems not the daughter of mortal man, but of God.” And though her image, which stayed constantly with me, gave assurance to Love to hold lordship over me, yet it was of such noble virtue that it never suffered Love to rule me without the faithful counsel of the reason in those matters in which it were useful to hear such counsel. And since to dwell upon the passions and actions of such early youth seems like telling an idle tale, I will leave them, and, passing over many things which might be drawn from the original where these lie hidden, I will come to those words which are written in my memory under larger paragraphs.

III.

When so many days had passed that nine years were exactly complete since the above-described apparition of this most gentle lady, on the last of these days it happened that this admirable lady appeared to me, clothed in purest white, between two gentle ladies who were of greater age; and, passing along a street, turned her eyes toward that place where I stood very timidly; and by her ineffable courtesy, which is to-day rewarded in the eternal world, saluted me with such virtue that it seemed to me then that I saw all the bounds of bliss. The hour when her most sweet salutation reached me was precisely the ninth of that day; and since it was the first time that her words came to my ears, I took in such sweetness, that, as it were intoxicated, I turned away from the folk; and, betaking myself to the solitude of my own chamber, I sat myself down to think of this most courteous lady.

And thinking of her, a sweet slumber overcame me, in which a marvellous vision appeared to me; for methought I saw in my chamber a cloud of the color of fire, within which I discerned a shape of a Lord of aspect fearful to whoso might look upon him; and he seemed to me so joyful within himself that a marvellous thing it was; and in his words he said many things which I understood not, save a few, among which I understood these: *Ego Dominus tuus* [I am thy Lord]. In his arms meseemed to see a person sleeping, naked, save that she seemed to me to be wrapped lightly in a crimson cloth; whom I, regarding very intently, recognized as the lady of the salutation, who had the day before deigned to salute me. And in one of his hands it seemed to me that he held a thing which was all on fire; and it seemed to me that he said to me these words: *Vide cor tuum* [Behold thy heart]. And when he had remained awhile, it seemed to me that he awoke her that slept; and he so far prevailed upon her with his craft as to make her eat that thing which was burning in his hand; and she ate it timidly. After this, it was but a short while before his joy turned into the most bitter lament; and as he wept he gathered up this lady in his arms, and with her it seemed to me that he went away toward heaven. Whereat I felt such great anguish, that my weak slumber could not endure it, but was broken, and I awoke. And straightway I began to reflect, and found that the hour in which this vision had appeared to me had been the fourth of the night; so that, it plainly appears, it was the first hour of the nine last hours of the night.

And thinking on what had appeared to me, I resolved to make it known to many who were famous poets at that time; and since I had already seen in myself the art of discoursing in rhyme, I resolved to make a sonnet in which I would

salute all the liegemen of Love, and, praying them to give an interpretation of my vision, would write to them that which I had seen in my slumber. And I began then this sonnet: —

To every captive soul and gentle heart
    Unto whose sight may come the present word,
    That they thereof to me their thoughts impart,
    Be greeting in Love’s name, who is their Lord.
Now of those hours wellnigh one third had gone
    What time doth every star appear most bright,
    When on a sudden Love before me shone,
    Remembrance of whose nature gives me fright.
Joyful to me seemed Love, and he was keeping
    My heart within his hands, while on his arm
    He held my lady, covered o’er, and sleeping.
Then waking her, he with this flaming heart
    Did humble feed her fearful of some harm.
    Thereon I saw him thence in tears depart.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first part I offer greeting, and ask for a reply; in the second I signify to what the reply is to be made. The second part begins here: “Now of.”

To this sonnet reply was made by many, and of diverse opinions. Among those who replied to it was he whom I call first of my friends, and he then wrote a sonnet which begins, “All worth, in my opinion, thou hast seen.” And this was, as it were, the beginning of the friendship between him and me, when he knew that I was he who had sent it to him.

The true meaning of this dream was not then seen by any one, but now it is plain to the simplest.

IV.

After this vision my natural spirit began to be hindered in its operation, for my soul was wholly given over to the thought of this most gentle lady; whereby in brief time I fell into so frail and feeble a condition, that my appearance was grievous to many of my friends; and many full of envy eagerly sought to know from me that which above all I wished to conceal from others. And I, perceiving their evil questioning, through the will of Love, who commanded me according to the counsel of reason, replied to them, that it was Love who had brought me to this pass. I spoke of Love, because I bore on my face so many of his signs that this could not be concealed. And when they asked me: “For whom has Love thus wasted thee?” I, smiling, looked at them and said nothing.

V.

One day it happened that this most gentle lady was sitting apart, where words concerning the Queen of Glory were to be heard; and I was in a place from which I saw my bliss. And in the direct line between her and me sat a gentle lady of very pleasing aspect, who often looked at me, wondering at my gaze, which seemed as if it ended upon her; so that many observed her looking. And such note was taken of it, that, as I departed from this place, I heard say near me: “Behold how that lady wastes the life of this man;” and naming her, I understood that they spoke of her who had been in the path of the straight line which, parting from the most gentle Beatrice, had ended in my eyes. Then I took great comfort, being sure that my secret had not been communicated to others on that day through my eyes; and at once I thought to make of this gentle lady a screen of the truth; and in a short time I made such show of it that many persons who held discourse about me believed that they knew my secret.

With this lady I dissembled for some months and years; and in order to establish in others a firmer credence, I wrote for her certain trifles in rhyme, which it is not my intention to transcribe here, save in so far as they might serve to treat of that most gentle Beatrice; and therefore I will leave them all, save that I will write something of them which seems to be praise of her.

VI.

I say that, during the time while this lady was the screen of so great a love as possessed me, the will came to me to record the name of that most gentle one, and to accompany it with many names of ladies, and especially with the name of this gentle lady; and I took the names of sixty of the most beautiful ladies of the city where my lady had been placed by the Most High Lord, and I composed an epistle in the form of a *serventese*, which I will not transcribe; and of which I would not have made mention, but for the sake of telling this which fell out marvellously in its composition, namely, that in no other place did the name of my lady endure to stand, but as the ninth in number among the names of these ladies.

VII.

The lady with whom I had so long concealed my will was obliged to depart from the above-mentioned city, and go to a very distant place; whereat I, wellnigh dismayed by reason of the fair defence which had failed me, did more discomfort me than I myself would beforehand have believed. And, thinking that, if I did not speak somewhat grievingly of her departure, people would sooner become acquainted with my secret, I resolved to make some lament for it in a sonnet, which I will transcribe because my lady was the immediate occasion of certain words which are in the sonnet, as is evident to whoever understands it; and then I devised this sonnet: — O ye who turn your steps along Love's way,

Consider, and then say,
If there be any grief than mine more great;
That ye to hear me deign, I only pray;
Then fancy, as ye may,
If I am every torment's inn and gate.
'T was not my little goodness to repay,
But bounty to display,
Love gave me such a sweet and pleasant fate,
That many times I heard behind me say,
"Ah, through what merit, pray,
Hath this man's heart become so light of late?"
But now is wholly lost my hardihead,
Which came from out a treasure of Love's own,
And I stay poor alone,
So that of speech there cometh to me dread.
Thus wishing now to do like unto one
Who, out of shame, concealeth his disgrace,
I wear a joyful face,
While in my heart I waste away and groan.

This sonnet has two principal parts; for in the first I intend to cry to the liegemen of Love with those words of Jeremy the prophet: O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus [All ye that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow]: *and to pray them to deign to listen to me. In the second I relate where Love had set me, with other intent than that which the last parts of the sonnet indicate; and I tell that which I have lost. The second part begins here:* "'T was not my."

VIII.

After the departure of this gentle lady it pleased the Lord of the Angels to call unto His glory a lady young and of exceeding gentle aspect, who had been very lovely in the above-mentioned city; whose body I saw lying without its soul, in midst of many ladies who were weeping very pitifully. Then, remembering that formerly I had seen her in company with that most gentle one, I could not restrain some tears; nay, weeping, I resolved to say some words about her death, in guerdon for that I had seen her sometimes with my lady. And thereon I touched somewhat in the last part of the words that I said of her, as plainly appears to him who understands them. And I devised then these two sonnets; the first of which begins, *Lovers, lament;* the second, *Discourteous death:* —

Lovers, lament, since Love himself now cries,
Hearing what cause ‘t is maketh him to weep.
Love seëth ladies mourn in sorrow deep,
Showing their bitter grieving through their eyes;
Because discourteous Death, on gentle heart
Working his cruel, unrelenting ways,
Hath all despoiled which in the world wins praise
For gentle dame, excepting honor’s part.
Hear ye what honor Love to her did pay;
For him in real form I saw lament
Above the lovely image of the dead;
And often toward the heaven he raised his head,
Whereto the gentle soul had made ascent
Which had been mistress of a shape so gay.

This first sonnet is divided into three parts. In the first, I call and solicit the liegemen of Love to weep; and I say that their Lord weeps, and that, hearing the cause why he weeps, they should be the more ready to listen to me. In the second, I relate the cause. In the third, I speak of certain honor that Love paid to this lady. The second part begins here: “Love seëth:” *the third, here:* “Hear ye.”

Discourteous Death, of clemency the foe,
Mother from old of woe,
Thou judgment irresistible, severe,
Since sorrow to this heart thou dost not spare,
Therefore in grief I go,
And blaming thee my very tongue outwear.

And since I wish of grace to strip thee bare,
Behoves me to declare
The wrong of wrongs in this thy guilty blow;
Not that the folk do not already know,
But to make each thy foe,
Who henceforth shall be nurtured with Love's care,
From out the world thou courtesy hast ta'en,
And virtue, which in woman is to praise;
And in youth's gayest days
The charm of love thou hast untimely slain.
Who is this lady I will not declare,
Save as her qualities do make her known;
Who merits heaven, alone
May have the hope her company to share.

This sonnet is divided into four parts. In the first I call Death by certain names proper to her; in the second, speaking to her, I tell the reason why I am moved to reproach her; in the third, I revile her; in the fourth, I turn to speak to an indefinite person, although definite as regards my meaning. The second part begins here: "Since sorrow;" *the third, here:* "And since I wish;" *the fourth, with* "Who merits."

IX.

Some days after the death of this lady, a thing happened wherefore it behoved me to leave the above-mentioned city, and to go toward those parts where that gentle lady was who had been my defence, though the end of my journey was not distant so far as she was. And notwithstanding I was outwardly in company with many, the journey displeased me, so that hardly could sighs relieve the anguish which the heart felt, because I was going away from my bliss. And then that most sweet Lord, who was lording it over me through virtue of the most gentle lady, appeared in my imagination like a pilgrim lightly clad and in mean raiment. He seemed disheartened, and was looking upon the ground, save that sometimes it seemed to me his eyes were turned upon a beautiful, swift and very clear stream which was flowing along by the road upon which I was.

It seemed to me that Love called me, and said to me these words: “I come from that lady who has been so long thy defence, and I know that she will not come back; and therefore that heart which I made thee keep with her I have it with me, and I carry it to a lady who will be thy defence, as this one was;” and he called her by name, so that I knew her well. “But, however, of these words which I have spoken unto thee, if thou shouldst tell any of them, tell them in such wise that the feigned love which thou hast shown for this lady, and which it will behove thee to show for another, shall not be revealed through them.” And when he had thus spoken, all this my imagination disappeared of a sudden, through the exceeding great part of himself which, it seemed to me, Love bestowed on me. And, as if changed in my aspect, I rode that day very pensive and accompanied by many sighs. The next day I began this sonnet: — As I the other day rode far from glad

Along a way it pleased me not to take,
I came on Love, who did his journey make,
In the light garment of a pilgrim clad.
His countenance, it seemed to me, was sad,
As if he grieved for his lost lordship’s sake;
Pensive he came, and forth his sighs did break;
Not to see folk, his head bowed down he had.
When me he saw, by name he called to me,
And said, “I come from that far distant part
Where through my will thy heart did dwell of late.
I bring it now on new delight to wait.”

Thereon I took of him so great a part
That quick he vanished; how, I did not see.

This sonnet has three parts. In the first part I tell how I found Love, and what he seemed to me; in the second, I tell that which he said to me, though not completely, through the fear that I had of disclosing my secret; in the third, I tell how he disappeared. The second begins here: "When me he saw;" *the third, here:* "Thereon I took."

X.

After my return, I set myself to seek out that lady whom my Lord had named to me on the road of sighs. And to the end that my speech may be more brief, I say that in short time I made her my defence to such degree, that very many people spoke of it beyond the terms of courtesy; wherefore many times it weighed heavily upon me. And on this account, namely, because of this injurious talk, which seemed to impute vice to me, that most gentle lady, who was the destroyer of all the vices and the queen of the virtues, passing by a certain place, denied me her most sweet salute, in which lay all my bliss. And departing a little from the present subject, I will declare that which her salutation with its virtue wrought in me.

XI.

I say that, whenever she appeared in any place, in the hope of her marvellous salutation there no longer remained to me an enemy; nay, a flame of charity possessed me, which made me pardon every one who had done me wrong; and had any one at that time questioned me of anything, my only answer would have been “Love,” and my face would have been clothed with humility And when she was about to salute me, a spirit of Love, destroying all the other spirits of the senses, urged forth the feeble spirits of sight, and said to them, “Go and do honor to your lady,” and he remained in their place. And whoever had wished to know Love might have done so by looking at the trembling of my eyes. And when this most gentle lady saluted me, Love was no such mediator that he had power to shade for me the insupportable bliss, but he, as if through excess of sweetness, became such, that my body, which was wholly under his rule, oftentimes moved like a heavy, inanimate thing. Hereby it plainly appears that in her salutation abode my bliss, which oftentimes surpassed and overflowed my capacity.

XII.

Now returning to my subject, I say that, after my bliss was denied to me, such grief came to me that, withdrawing from folk, I went into a solitary place to bathe the earth with most bitter tears. And when this weeping was a little assuaged, I betook myself to my chamber, where I could lament without being heard. And here, calling upon the lady of courtesy for pity, and saying, “Love, help thy liegeman!” I fell asleep, like a beaten child, in tears.

It happened, about the middle of my sleep, that I seemed to see in my chamber a youth sitting at my side, clothed in whitest raiment, and very thoughtful in his aspect. He was looking upon me where I lay; and when he had looked upon me for some time, it seemed to me that, sighing, he called me and said to me these words: *Fili mi, tempus est ut prætermittantur simulata nostra* [My son, it is time that our feignings be given up]. Then it seemed to me that I recognized him, since he called me even as he had many times before called me in my slumbers.

And, looking at him, it seemed to me that he wept piteously, and it seemed that he waited for some word from me. Wherefore, taking heart, I began to speak thus with him: “Lord of nobleness, why dost thou weep?” And he said to me these words: *Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiæ partes; tu autem non sic* [I am as the centre of a circle to which the parts of the circumference bear an equal relation; but thou art not so.] Then, thinking on his words, it seemed to me that he had spoken to me very obscurely, so that I forced myself to speak, and said to him these words: “What is this, Lord, which thou sayest to me with such obscurity?” And he said to me in the common tongue: “Ask no more than may be useful to thee.”

And therefore I began to discourse with him of the salutation which had been denied me, and I asked of him the reason; whereupon in this wise he replied to me: “This our Beatrice heard from certain persons who talked of thee, that the lady whom I named to thee on the road of sighs was receiving from thee some harm. And therefore this most gentle lady, who is adverse to every harm, did not deign to salute thy person, fearing lest it should be harmful. Wherefore, to the end that the truth of thy long-kept secret may be somewhat known to her, I will that thou say certain words in rhyme, in which thou shalt set forth the power that I hold over thee through her, and how thou wert straightway hers even from thy boyhood; and for this, call as a witness him who knows it, and also do thou pray him that he should tell it to her. And I, who am he, willingly will speak to her of it; and through this she shall understand thy will, and, understanding it, shall

interpret aright the words of the deceived. Make, as it were, a mediator of these words, so that thou speak not to her directly, for this is not befitting. And without me send them nowhere where they might be heard by her; but take care to adorn them with sweet harmony, wherein I shall be whenever there be need."

And having said these words he disappeared, and my sleep was broken. Then I, remembering myself, found that this vision had appeared to me in the ninth hour of the day; and before I went out from that chamber I resolved to make a ballad in which I would execute that which my Lord had laid upon me, and I made this ballad: — Ballad, I send thee forth upon Love's trace,

For thou must him before my Lady bring,
So that of my excuse, which thou dost sing,
My Lord may then with her speak face to face.
Such courteous aspect, Ballad, thou dost show,
That all alone, indeed,
Thou oughtest not in any place to fear;
But if securely thou dost wish to go,
First to find Love is need,
For ill it were without Him to appear;
Seeing that she who ought thy words to hear,
If she be angry, as I think, with me,
And thou with Him companioned should not be,
Might lightly make thee fall into disgrace.
With dulcet sound, when with Him thou mayst be,
Begin with words like these,
First begging her that she would pity take: —
"Lady, he who to you now sendeth me
Wills, when to you it please,
That his excuse you deign to hear me make.
Love is that one who, for thy beauty's sake,
Makes him, as He doth will, his looks to change;
Then why He made his eyes on others range.
Think you, since in his heart no change hath place."
Tell her: "O Lady, this his heart is stayed
With faith so firmly just,
Save to serve you, it hath no other care.
Early 't was yours, and never hath it strayed."
But if she thee distrust,
Say, "Ask of Love, who will the truth declare."
And at the end, beg her, with humble prayer,

That if it trouble her to pardon give,
She then should bid that I no longer live,
Nor shall she see her servant sue for grace.
And say to Him who is compassion's key,
Ere from her thou depart,
That He may tell her of my reason fair, —
"Through favor unto my sweet melody,
Stay with her where thou art,
And of thy servant, what thou wilt, declare,
And if she grant forgiveness through they prayer,
Make peace on her fair countenance to shine."
When it may please thee, gentle Ballad mine,
Honor to win, go forth upon thy race.

This ballad is divided into three parts. In the first, I tell it whither it is to go, and encourage it that it may go the more assured; and I tell whose company it is to seek, if it wishes to go securely, and without any danger. In the second, I tell that which it is beholden to make known. In the third, I give it leave to go when it will, commending its going to the arms of fortune. The second part begins, "With dulcet sound;" *the third,* "When it may please thee." *Some man may object against me and say, that he understands not to whom my speech in the second part is addressed, since the ballad is naught else but these words which I am speaking; and therefore I say that I intend to solve and clear up this doubt in this little book, even in a more difficult passage; and then he who may here be in doubt, or who may choose to object after that fashion, will understand.*

XIII.

After this above-described vision, having now spoken the words that Love had imposed on me to speak, many and diverse thoughts began to assail and to try me, and against each I was as it were without defence. Among which thoughts four chiefly hindered the repose of my life. One of them was this: “The lordship of Love is good, in that it withdraws the inclination of his liegeman from all vile things.” The next was this: “The lordship of Love is not good, because the more fidelity his liegeman bears to him, so much the heavier and more grievous trials he must needs endure.” The next was this: “The name of Love is so sweet to hear, that it seems to me impossible that his effects in most things should be other than sweet, seeing that names follow the things named, as it is written, *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*” [Names are consequences of things]. The fourth was this: “The lady through whom Love thus binds thee is not as other ladies that her heart may be lightly moved.” And each thought so assailed me that it made me stand like one who knows not by which way to take his journey, and who desires to go, and knows not whither he should go. And if I thought of desiring to seek a way common to them, namely, that wherein all would accord, this way was very hostile to me, namely, to call upon and put myself in the arms of Pity. And while I abode in this condition, the will came to me to write some rhymed words thereon, and I devised then this sonnet: — All of my thoughts concerning Love discourse,

And have in them so great variety,
That one to wish his sway compelleth me,
Another argues evil of his force;
One, hoping, sweetness doth to me impart,
Another makes me oftentimes lament;
Only in craving Pity they consent,
Trembling with fear that is within my heart.
Thus know I not from which my theme to take;
I fain would speak, and know not what to say;
In such perplexities of love I live:
And if with all to make accord I strive,
I needs unto my very foe must pray,
My Lady Pity, my defence to make.

This sonnet may be divided into four parts. In the first, I say and declare that all my thoughts are concerning Love: in the second, I say that they are diverse, and

I relate their diversity: in the third, I say in what they all seem to accord: in the fourth, I say that, wishing to speak of Love, I know not from which to take my theme, and if I wish to take it from them all, I needs must call upon my foe, my Lady Pity. I say "my Lady," as it were in a scornful mode of speech. The second begins here: "And have in them:" *the third*, "Only in craving;" *the fourth*, "Thus know I."

XIV.

After the battle of the diverse thoughts, it happened that this most gentle lady went to a place where many gentle ladies were assembled; to which place I was conducted by a friendly person, who thought to give me a great pleasure in leading me where so many ladies were displaying their beauties. Wherefore I, hardly knowing whereunto I had been led, and trusting myself to the person who had conducted his friend to the verge of life, said: “Wherefore are we come to these ladies?” Then he said to me: “To the end that they may be worthily served.”

And the truth is, that they were met together here to attend on a gentle lady who was married that day; and therefore, according to the custom of the above-mentioned city, it behoved them to bear her company at her first sitting at table in the house of her new-made husband. So that I, believing to do the pleasure of this friend, determined to stand in company with him at the service of the ladies. And as soon as I had thus resolved, I seemed to feel a wonderful tremor begin in my breast on the left side, and extend suddenly through all the parts of my body. Then I say that, dissembling, I leaned against a painting which ran around the wall of this house, and fearing lest my trembling should be observed by others, I lifted mine eyes, and, looking at the ladies, saw among them the most gentle Beatrice. Then were my spirits so destroyed by the force that Love acquired, on seeing himself in such neighborhood to this most gentle lady, that none remained alive except the spirits of the sight, and even these remained outside of their instruments, because Love wished to stand in their most noble place to look upon this marvellous lady. And although I was other than at first, I grieved much for these little spirits, who were lamenting bitterly, and saying, “If he so like a thunderbolt had not smitten us from our place, we might stand to gaze upon the marvel of this lady, as do the others our peers.”

I say that many of these ladies, perceiving my transfiguration, began to wonder; and, talking, make a mock of me with this most gentle lady. Thereupon my friend, who in good faith had been deceived, took me by the hand, and, leading me out from the sight of these ladies, asked me what ailed me. Then, having somewhat reposed, and my dead spirits having risen again, and those that were driven out having returned to their possessions, I said to this my friend these words: “I have held my feet on that part of life beyond which no man can go with intent to return.”

And leaving him, I returned to the chamber of tears, in which, weeping and ashamed, I said within myself, “if this lady knew my condition, I do not believe

that she would thus have made mock of my person; nay, I believe that she would feel much pity therefor.” And being in this grief, I resolved to say some words in which, speaking to her, I would explain the cause of my transfigurement, and would say that I know well that it is not known, and that, were it known, I believe that it would move others to pity; and I resolved to say them, desiring that peradventure they might come to her hearing. And then I devised this sonnet: — With other ladies you make mock of me,

And think not, Lady, of the reason why
So strange a shape I offer to your eye,
Whene’er it hap that I your beauty see.
If this you knew, your pity could not hold
Longer against me its accustomed guise;
For when so near you Love doth me surprise,
He courage takes and such assurance bold,
He smites among my spirits chilled with fear,
And some he slays, and some he doth expel,
So he alone remains to look on you;
Hence I another’s form am changed into,
Yet not so changed but even then full well
The grievous cries of those expelled I hear.

This sonnet I do not divide into parts, because the division is made only for the sake of disclosing the meaning of the thing divided; therefore, since, through what has been said of its occasion, it has been made sufficiently plain, there is no need of division. It is true that among the words whereby the occasion of this sonnet is set forth, certain ambiguous words are found; namely, when I say that Love slays all my spirits, and only those of vision remain alive, and even they outside of their instruments. And this ambiguity it were impossible to solve to one who is not in like degree the liegeman of Love; and to such as are so, that is already plain which would solve these ambiguous words; and therefore it is not well for me to explain this ambiguousness, since my speech would be vain or superfluous.

XV.

After this strange transfiguration, a strong thought came to me which seldom left me, nay, rather continually recurred to me, and held this discourse with me: “Since thou presentest so contemptible an appearance when thou art near this lady, why then seekest thou to see her? Behold, if she were to ask thee this, what wouldst thou have to answer? supposing that all thy faculties were free, so that thou couldst answer her.” And to this another humble thought replied, and said: “if I lost not my faculties and were free so that I could answer, I should say to her, that so soon as I picture to myself her marvellous beauty, so soon a desire to see her comes to me, which is of such great virtue that it slays and destroys in my memory that which might rise against it; and therefore past sufferings hold me not back from seeking the sight of her.” Wherefore, moved by such thoughts, I resolved to say certain words, in which, excusing myself to her from blame on this account, I would also set down what befell me in her presence; and I devised this sonnet: — That which opposeth in my mind doth die

Whene’er I come to see you, beauteous Joy!
And I hear Love say, when to you I ‘m nigh,
”Begone, if death be unto thee annoy.”
My face the color of my heart displays,
Which, fainting, nay chance support doth seek;
And as I tremble in my drunken daze,
”Die! die!” the very stones appear to shriek.
He who may then behold me doeth ill,
If my affrighted soul he comfort not,
Showing at least that me he pitieth,
Through that compassion which your scorn doth kill,
And which is by the lifeless look begot
Of eyes which have a longing for their death.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I tell the reason why I abstain not from seeking the presence of this lady; in the second, I tell that which befalls me when I draw nigh to her, and this part begins here: “And I hear Love.” *And this second part is also divided into five, according to the five different facts related; for in the first I tell that which Love, counselled by the reason, says to me when I am near her; in the second, I set forth the state of my heart by the example of my face; in the third, I tell how every reliance fails me; in the fourth, I say that he sins who shows not pity for me, inasmuch as this would be some*

comfort to me; in the last, I tell why others ought to have pity, namely, because of the piteous look which comes into my eyes, which piteous look is destroyed, that is, is not apparent unto others, on account of the derision of this lady which draws to the like disposition those who perchance might see this woe. The second part begins here: "My face;" *the third*, "And as I tremble;" *the fourth*, "He who may then;" *the fifth*, "Through that compassion."

XVI.

After I had devised this sonnet, a wish moved me to say also some words in which I would tell four things further in regard to my state, which it seemed to me had not yet been made manifest by me. The first of which is, that ofttimes I grieved when my memory excited my fancy to imagine what Love did to me; the second is, that ofttimes Love assailed me on a sudden with such force that naught remained alive in me save a thought which spoke of my lady; the third is, that, when this onset of Love thus attacked me, I went, almost quite without color, to look on this lady, believing that the sight of her would be my defence from this attack, forgetting that which befell me in approaching gentleness so great; the fourth is, how this sight not only defended me not, but finally discomfited my little remaining life. And therefore I devised this sonnet: — The dark condition Love doth on me lay

Many a time occurs unto my thought,
And then comes pity, so that oft I say,
Ah me! to such a pass was man e’er brought?
For on a sudden Love with me doth strive,
So that my life almost abandons me;
One spirit only doth escape alive,
And that remains because it speaks of thee.
Then to mine aid I summon up my strength,
And so, all pale, and empty of defence,
I seek thy sight, thinking to be made whole;
And if to look I lift mine eyes at length,
Within my heart an earthquake doth commence,
Which from my pulses driveth out the soul.

This sonnet is divided into four parts, inasmuch as four things are related in it; and since these are spoken of above, I concern myself only to distinguish the parts by their beginnings: wherefore I say that the second part begins here: “For on a sudden;” *the third, here:* “Then to mine aid;” *the fourth:* “And if to look.”

XVII.

After I had devised these three sonnets, in which I had spoken to this lady, since they left little of my condition untold, thinking to be silent and to say no more of this, because it seemed to me that I had sufficiently disclosed myself, although ever afterwards I should abstain from addressing her, it behoved me to take up a new theme, and one more noble than the foregoing. And because the occasion of the new theme is pleasant to hear, I will tell it as briefly as I can.

XVIII.

Inasmuch as through my looks many persons had learned the secret of my heart, certain ladies who were met together, taking pleasure in one another's company, were well acquainted with my heart, because each of them had witnessed many of my discomfitures. And I, passing near them, as chance led me, was called by one of these gentle ladies; and she who had called me was a lady of very pleasing speech; so that, when I drew nigh to them, and saw plainly that my most gentle lady was not among them, reassuring myself, I saluted them, and asked what might be their pleasure. The ladies were many, and certain of them were laughing together. There were others who were looking at me, awaiting what I might say. There were others who were talking together, one of whom, turning her eyes toward me, and calling me by name, said these words: "To what end lovest thou this thy lady, since thou canst not sustain her presence? Tell it to us, for surely the end of such a love must be most strange." And when she had said these words to me, not only she, but all the others, began to await with their look my reply. Then I said to them these words: "My ladies, the end of my love was formerly the salutation of this lady of whom you perchance are thinking, and in that dwelt the beatitude which was the end of all my desires. But since it has pleased her to deny it to me, my lord Love, through his grace, has placed all my beatitude in that which cannot fail me."

Then these ladies began to speak together: and as sometimes we see rain falling mingled with beautiful snow, so it seemed to me I saw their words issue mingled with sighs. And after they had somewhat spoken among themselves, this lady who had first spoken to me said to me yet these words: "We pray thee that thou tell us wherein consists this beatitude of thine." And I, replying to her, said thus: "In those words which praise my lady." And she replied; "If thou hast told us the truth, those words which thou hast said to her, setting forth thine own condition, must have been composed with other intent."

Then I, thinking on these words, as if ashamed, departed from them, and went saying within myself: "Since there is such beatitude in those words which praise my lady, why has my speech been of aught else?" And therefore I resolved always henceforth to take for theme of my speech that which should be the praise of this most gentle one. And thinking much on this, I seemed to myself to have undertaken a theme too lofty for me, so that I dared not to begin; and that I tarried some days with desire to speak, and with fear of beginning.

XIX.

Then it came to pass that, walking on a road alongside of which was flowing a very clear stream, so great a desire to say somewhat in verse came upon me, that I began to consider the method I should observe; and I thought that to speak of her would not be becoming unless I were to speak of her would not be becoming unless I were to speak to ladies in the second person; and not to every lady, but only to those who are gentle, and are not women merely. Then I say that my tongue spoke as if moved of its own accord, and said, *Ladies that have intelligence of Love*. These words I laid up in my mind with great joy, thinking to take them for my beginning; wherefore then, having returned to the above-mentioned city, after some days of thought I began a canzone with this beginning, arranged in the mode which will be seen below in its division.

Ladies that have intelligence of Love,
I of my lady wish with you to speak;
Not that I can believe to end her praise,
But to discourse that I may ease my mind.
I say that when I think upon her worth,
So sweet doth Love make himself feel to me,
That if I then should lose not hardihood,
Speaking, I should enamour all mankind.
And I wish not so loftily to speak
As to become, through fear of failure, vile;
But of her gentle nature I will treat
In manner light compared with her desert,
Ye loving dames and damosels, with you,
For ‘t is not thing of which to speak to others.
An angel crieth in the mind divine,
And saith: “O Sire, on earth is to be seen
A miracle in action, that proceeds
From out a soul which far as here doth shine.
Heaven, which hath not any other defect
Save want of her, demands her of its Lord,
And every Saint doth for this favor beg.”
Only Compassion our part defendeth;
And thus speaks God, who of my lady thinks:
”O my elect, now suffer ye in peace

That, while it pleaseth me, your hope abide
There, where is one who dreads the loss of her:
And who shall say in hell to the foredoomed,
'I have beheld the hope of those in bliss.'"
My lady is desired in highest heaven;
Now will I of her virtue make you know.
I say: Whoso would seem a gentle dame
Should go with her; for when she goes her way
Love casts a frost upon all caitiff hearts,
So that their every thought doth freeze and perish.
And who can bear to stay on her to look
Will noble thing become, or else will die.
And when one finds that he may worthy be
To look on her, he doth his virtue prove;
For that arrives to him which gives him health,
And humbles him till he forgets all wrong.
Yet hath God given her for greater grace,
That who hath spoke with her cannot end ill.
Love saith concerning her: "How can it be
That mortal thing be thus adorned, and pure?"
Then, gazing on her, to himself he swears
That God in her a new thing means to make.
Color of pearl so clothes her as doth best
Become a lady, nowise in excess.
Whate'er of good Nature can make she is,
And by her pattern beauty tries itself.
From out her eyes, howe'er she moveth them,
Spirits inflamed of love go forth, which strike
The eyes of him who then may look on them,
And enter so that each doth find the heart.
Love you behold depicted in her smile,
Whereon no one can look with steadfast gaze.
I know, Canzonè, thou wilt go to speak
With many ladies, when I send thee forth.
And now I bid thee, having bred thee up
As young and simple daughter unto Love,
That where thou comest thou shouldst praying say:
"Direct me on my way, for I am sent
To her with praise of whom I am adorned."

And if thou wishest not to go in vain,
Make thou no stay where villain folk may be;
Endeavor, if thou mayst, to be acquaint
Only with lady or with courteous man,
Who thee shall guide along the quickest way.
Thou wilt find Love in company with her;
Commend me to him as behoveth thee.

In order that this canzone may be better understood, I shall divide it more elaborately than the other preceding things, and therefore I make of it three parts. The first part is a proem to the words which follow; the second is the subject treated of; the third is, as it were, a handmaid to the words which precede. The second begins here: "An angel crieth;" *the third here:* "I know, Canzonè." *The first part is divided into four; in the first, I tell to whom I wish to speak of my lady, and wherefore I wish to speak; in the second, I tell what she seems to myself, when I think upon her worth, and how I would speak if I lost not hardihood; in the third, I tell how I think to speak in order that I may not be hindered by faintheartedness; in the fourth, repeating yet once more to whom I intend to speak, I tell the reason why I speak to them. The second begins here:* "I say;" *the third, here:* "And I wish not;" *the fourth here:* "Ye loving dames."

Then when I say, "An angel crieth," *I begin to treat of this lady, and this part is divided into two; in the first, I tell what is comprehended of her in heaven; in the second, I tell what is comprehended of her on earth, — here:* "My lady is desired."

This second part is divided into two; for in the first I speak of her in respect of the nobility of her soul, recounting some of the virtues which proceed from her soul; in the second, I speak of her in respect of the nobility of her body, recounting some of her beauties, — here: "Love saith concerning her." *This second part is divided into two; for in the first I speak of some of the beauties which belong to her whole person; in the second, I speak of some of the beauties which belong to special parts of her person, — here:* "From out her eyes." *This second part is divided into two; for in one I speak of the eyes which are the beginning of Love; in the second, I speak of the mouth which is the end of Love. And in order that every evil thought may be removed hence, let him who reads remember what is written above, that the salutation of this lady, which was an action of her mouth, was the end of my desires so long as I was able to receive it.*

Then when I say, “I know, Canzonè,” *I add a stanza, as if for a handmaid to the others, in which I tell what I desire of this my canzone. And since this last part is easy to be understood, I do not trouble myself with more divisions.*

I say, indeed, that to make the meaning of this canzone more clear, it might be needful to employ more minute divisions; but nevertheless it will not displease me that he who has not wit enough to understand it by means of those already made should let it alone; for surely I fear I have communicated its meaning to too many even through these divisions which have been made, if it should happen that many should hear it.

XX.

After this canzone had been somewhat divulged to the world, inasmuch as one of my friends had heard it, a desire moved him to beg me that I should tell him what Love is, entertaining perhaps through the words he had heard a hope of me beyond my desert. Wherefore I, thinking that after such a treatise it were beautiful to treat somewhat of Love, and thinking that my friend was to be served, resolved to speak words in which I would treat of Love, and then I devised this sonnet: — Love is but one thing with the gentle heart,

As in the saying of the sage we find;
Thus one from other cannot be apart,
More than the reason from the reasoning mind.
When Nature amorous becomes, she makes
Love then her Lord, the heart his dwelling-place,
Within which, sleeping, his repose he takes,
Sometimes for brief, and sometimes for long space.
Beauty in lady sage doth then appear
Which pleaseth so the eyes, that in the heart
Desire for the pleasing thing hath birth;
And sometimes it so long abideth there,
It makes Love's spirit wide awake to start:
The like in lady doth a man of worth.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I tell of him in respect of what he is potentially; in the second, I tell of him in respect to his potentiality being brought into act. The second begins here: "Beauty in lady sage." *The first is divided into two; in the first, I tell in what subject this potentiality exists; in the second, I tell how this subject and this potentiality are brought together into being, and how one is related to the other, as form to matter. The second begins here:* "When Nature." *Then, when I say:* "Beauty in lady," *I tell how this potentiality is brought into act; and first, how it is brought in man, then, how it is brought in woman, — here:* "The like in lady."

XXI.

After I had treated of Love in the above rhyme, the will came to me to speak further in praise of this most gentle lady words by which I would show how this Love is awakened by her, and how she not only awakens him there where he is sleeping, but there where he is not potentially she, marvellously working, makes him come; and I devised then this sonnet: — Within her eyes my lady beareth Love,

So that whom she regards is gentle made;
All toward her turn, where'er her steps are stayed,
And whom she greets, his heart doth trembling move;
So that with face cast down, all pale to view,
For every fault of his he then doth sigh;
Anger and pride away before her fly: —
Assist me, dames, to pay her honor due.
All sweetness truly, every humble thought,
The heart of him who hears her speak doth hold;
Whence he is blessed who hath seen her erewhile.
What seems she when a little she doth smile
Cannot be kept in mind, cannot be told.
Such strange and gentle miracle is wrought.

This sonnet has three parts. In the first, I tell how this lady reduces this potentiality into act, as respects that most noble part, her eyes; and in the third, I tell how this same thing is effected as respects that most noble part, her mouth. And between the first and the third is a little part, which beseeches aid, as it were, for the preceding part and for the following, and begins here: "Assist me, dames." *The third begins here:* "All sweetness." *The first is divided into three; for in the first I tell how she with power makes gentle that which she looks upon; and this is as much as to say that she brings Love potentially there where he is not. In the second, I tell how she brings Love into act in the hearts of all those upon whom she looks. In the third, I tell that which she then effects with power in their hearts. The second begins,* "All toward;" *the third,* "And whom she greets."

When, afterward, I say, "Assist me, dames," *I indicate to whom it is my intention to speak, calling upon these ladies to aid me to pay her honor. Then, when I say,* "All sweetness," *I tell the same thing as has been said in the first part, according to two acts of her mouth, one of which is her most sweet speech, and*

the other her marvellous smile, except that I do not tell of this last how it works in the hearts of others, because the memory cannot retain it, nor its effects.

XXII.

Not many days had passed after this, when it pleased the Lord of Glory, who refused not death for himself, that he who had been the begetter of such a marvel as this most noble Beatrice was seen to be, departing from this life, should go verily unto the eternal glory. Wherefore, inasmuch as such a departure is grievous to those who remain, and have been friends of him who is gone, — and there is no friendship so intimate as that of a good father with a good child, and of a good child with a good father; and this lady had been of the highest degree of goodness, and her father, as is believed by many, and is true, had been good in a high degree, — it is plain that this lady was most bitterly full of grief.

And inasmuch as, according to the custom of the above-mentioned city, ladies assemble with ladies, and men with men, in such affliction, many ladies assembled where this Beatrice was weeping piteously. Wherefore, seeing certain of them returning from her, I heard them speak of this most gentle lady, how she was lamenting. Among their words I heard how they said: “Truly, she so weeps that whoever should behold her must die of pity.” Then these ladies passed on; and I remained in such grief that some tears bathed my face, so that, often putting my hands before mine eyes, I covered it. And had it not been that I expected to hear further of her, for I was in a place where most of the ladies who came from her passed by, I should have hidden myself as soon as the tears had assailed me.

And, therefore, still tarrying in the same place, more ladies passed near me, who went along talking together, and saying: “Who of us should ever be joyful, since we have heard this lady speak so piteously?” After these, others passed, who said, as they went by: “This one who is here is weeping neither more nor less than if he had seen her as we have.” And then others said of me: “Behold, this man is become such that he seems not himself.” And thus these ladies passing by, I heard speech of her and of myself after this fashion which has been told.

Wherefore, afterwards musing, I resolved to speak words in verse, inasmuch as I had fit occasion to speak, in which I would include all that I had heard from these ladies. And since I would willingly have questioned them, had it not been for blame to me, I treated my theme as if I had questioned them, and they had replied to me. And I made two sonnets; and in the first I question, in the way in which the desire came to me to question; and in the other, I tell their answer, taking that which I heard from them as if they had said it in reply to me. And I began the first, “*Ye who a semblance;*” the second, “*Art thou then he*.”

Ye who a semblance so dejected bear,
    And who with eyes cast down your trouble show,
    Whence do ye come, that thus your color now
    Appears like that which pity's self doth wear?
Our gentle lady truly have ye seen,
    Bathing her face with tears of loving woe?
    Tell me, ye ladies; my heart tells me so,
    Since I behold you going with grave mien.
And if ye come from sight of grief so great,
    Be pleased to stay a little here with me,
    And hide not from me what may be her state.
For in your eyes such trace of tears I see,
    And ye return with such a mournful gait,
    That my heart trembles, thus beholding ye.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I call upon and ask these ladies if they come from her, saying to them that I believe it, because they return as if ennobled. In the second, I pray them to tell me of her; and the second begins here: "And if ye come."

Art thou then he who oft discourse did hold
    Of this our lady unto us alone?
    Thy voice resembles his indeed in tone,
    But thy form seems to us of other mould.
Ah! wherefore weep'st thou so without control,
    Thou makest us to feel a pity keen?
    And hast thou then, forsooth, her weeping seen,
    So thou canst not conceal thy grieving soul?
Leave tears to us, and let us sadly go,
    (He doeth ill who seeketh us to aid,)
    For we have heard her speak in tearful woe;
And on her face such sorrow is displayed,
    That who had wished to gaze upon her so,
    Before her would in death be weeping laid.

This sonnet has four parts, according to the four fashions of speech of the ladies for whom I reply. And because these are sufficiently shown above, I do not concern myself to tell the purport of the parts, and therefore I only mark them.

The second begins here: “Ah! wherefore weep’st thou;” *the third:* “Leave tears to us;” *the fourth:* “and on her face.”

XXIII.

A few days after this it fell out that a grievous infirmity came upon me in a certain part of my body, from which I suffered for many days most bitter pain, which brought me to such weakness that I was forced to lie as one who cannot move. I say that on the ninth day, feeling almost intolerable pain, a thought came to me which was of my lady. And when I had thought somewhat of her, I returned in thought to my enfeebled life, and seeing how slight was its duration, even were it sound, I began lamenting within myself at such wretchedness. Wherefore, sighing deeply, I said within myself: “It must needs be that the most gentle Beatrice shall at some time die.”

And thereupon a strong bewilderment so overcame me, that I closed my eyes, and began to be distracted like a person in a frenzy, and to imagine in this wise: that, at the beginning of the wandering which my fancy made, certain faces of ladies with hair dishevelled appeared to me, and they said to me: “Thou too shalt die.” And after these ladies, there appeared to me certain strange faces, and horrible to behold, which said to me: “Thou art dead.”

Thus my fancy beginning to wander, I was brought to such a pass that I knew not where I was; and it seemed to me that I saw ladies with hair dishevelled go by, weeping, marvellously sad; and it seemed to me that I saw the sun grow dark, so that the stars showed themselves of such a color as to make me deem they wept; and it seemed to me that the birds as they flew fell dead, and that there were very great earthquakes. And in this fantasy, marvelling and much afraid, I imagined that a certain friend came to me to say: “Dost thou then not know? thine admirable lady is departed from this world.” Then I began to weep very piteously; and wept not only in my imagination, but wept with my eyes, bathing them with real tears.

I imagined that I looked toward heaven, and it seemed to me that I saw a multitude of angels, who were returning upwards, and had before them a little cloud of exceeding whiteness; and it seemed to me that these angels sang gloriously, and the words of their song it seemed to me were these: “*Osanna in excelsis!*” — and aught else meseemed not to hear. Then it seemed to me that the heart wherein was so much love said to me: “True is it that our lady lies dead.” And forthwith it seemed to me that I went to behold the body in which that most noble and blessed soul had dwelt. And so strong was the erring fancy, that it showed to me this lady dead; and it seemed to me that ladies had covered her head with a white veil, and it seemed to me that her face had such an aspect of humility that it seemed to say: “Now do I behold the beginning of peace.”

In this imagination there came to me such humility through seeing her, that I called upon Death, and said: “Most sweet Death, come unto me, and be not discourteous to me; for thou oughtest to be gentle, in such place hast thou been. Come then unto me, who greatly desire thee; and thou seest it, for I already wear thy color.” And when I had seen all the mournful ministries completed which are wont to be rendered to the bodies of the dead, it seemed to me that I returned to my chamber; and here it seemed to me that I looked toward heaven, and so strong was my imagination that, weeping, I began to say with my real voice: “O most beautiful soul, how blessed is he who sees thee!” And as I said these words, with a grievous sob of weeping, and called upon Death to come to me, a young and gentle lady, who was at the side of my bed, believing that my weeping and my words were lamentation on account of the pain of my infirmity, with great fear began to weep. Wherefore other ladies who were in the chamber became aware that I was weeping, through the tears they saw her shed; wherefore making her, who was connected with me in the nearest kingship, depart from me, they drew towards me to wake me, believing that I had been dreaming, and said to me: “Sleep no more, nor be discomforted.” And as they thus spoke to me, the strong fantasy ended at the moment when I was about to say: “O Beatrice, blessed be thou!” And I had already said, “O Beatrice,” when, arousing myself, I opened my eyes and saw that I had been deluded. And although I had uttered this name, my voice was so broken by sobs that those ladies had not been able to understand me. And notwithstanding I was sore ashamed, nevertheless, by some admonition of Love, I turned me to them. And when they saw me, they began to say: “He seems far gone:” and to say each to other: “Let us try to comfort him.” Thereupon they said many words to comfort me; and then they asked me of what I had been afraid. Wherefore I, being somewhat comforted, and having recognized the falsity of my imagining, replied to them, “I will tell you what has ailed me.” Then, beginning at the beginning, I told them even to the end that which I had seen, keeping silent the name of this most gentle lady.

Wherefore afterwards, being healed of this infirmity, I resolved to speak concerning that which had befallen me, since it seemed to me that it would be a thing delightful to hear; and so I devised this canzone concerning it: — A lady, pitiful, and young in years,

Adorned full well with human gentilesse,
Who present was where oft I called on Death,
Seeing my eyes to be filled up of woe,
And hearing the vain words that fell from me,
Was by her fear impelled to weep aloud;

And other ladies who were thus made ware
Of me, through her who with me there was weeping,
Made her go away,
While they drew near to cause me to awake.
One said: “No longer sleep;”
And one: “Why art thou so discomforted?”
Thereon the novel fantasy I left
In giving utterance to my lady’s name.
So mournful was my voice, and broken so
By anguish and by tears, that I alone
The name within my heart did understand.
And thereon, with the look of utter shame,
Which had gained full possession of my face,
Love did compel me unto them to turn.
And such my color was to look upon,
As made these others to discourse of death.
”Ah! let us comfort him,”
One lady to the other humbly prayed;
And oftentimes they said:
”What hast thou seen that thou no strength hast
left?”
And when a little I was comforted,
”Ladies,” I said, “I will tell it to you.
While I was thinking of my fragile life,
And saw how slight continuance it hath,
Love wept within my heart, where he abides;
Whereby, indeed, my soul was so dismayed,
That then I, sighing, said within my thought:
’Sure it must be my lady too shall die.’
Then into such bewilderment I fell,
I closed my eyes that basely were weighed down;
And consternated so
My spirits were, that each went straying off.
And then imagining,
Bereft of consciousness alike and truth,
Ladies with looks of wrath appeared to me,
Who said to me: ‘Thou too shalt die, shalt die.’
Then saw I many fearful things within
The false imagining wherein I lay;

Meseemed to be I know not in what place,
And to see ladies pass dishevelled by,
Some weeping and some uttering laments,
So that the fire of sadness they shot forth.
Then, as it seemed, I by degrees beheld
The sun grow dark, and then the star appear,
And he and she to weep;
The birds in their mid-flight through air fell down,
And the earth seemed to shake;
And I beheld a man pale-faced and hoarse,
Who said: ‘What ails thee? Knowst thou not the
news?
Dead is thy lady, she that was so fair.’
I raised my eyes which with my tears were bathed,
And saw what seemed to be a rain of manna, —
The Angels, who to heaven were returning,
And had in front of them a little cloud,
Following which, they all ‘Hosanna!’ sang;
Had they said more, to you I would it tell.
And then Love said: ‘No more I hide from thee;
Come thou to see our lady where she lies.’
The false imagining
Conducted me to see my lady dead;
And, as I looked, I saw
That ladies with a veil were covering her;
And she had a humility so true,
It seemed as if she said, ‘I am in peace.’
So humble in my sorrow I became
Seeing in her such humbleness displayed,
That I said: ‘Death, thee very sweet I hold;
Thou oughtest now to be a gentle thing,
Since thou within my lady hast abode,
And thou shouldst pity have, and not disdain.
Behold! I am so eager among thine
To be, that I resemble thee in truth.
Come! my heart calleth thee.’
Then I departed, the sad rites complete;
And when I was alone,
Looking unto the realm on high, I said,

’Blessëd is he who sees thee, beauteous soul!’
Ye called me thereupon, thanks be to you.”

This canzone has two parts. In the first, I tell, speaking to an undefined person, how I was roused from a vain fantasy by certain ladies, and how I promised them to tell it. In the second, I tell how I told it to them. The second begins here: “While I was thinking.” *The first part is divided into two; in the first, I tell that which certain ladies, and that which one alone, said and did on account of my fantasy, before I had returned to true consciousness; in the second, I tell that which these ladies said to me after I left this frenzy, and this part begins here:* “So mournful was my voice.” *Then when I say,* “While I was thinking,” *I tell how I told them this my imagination, and of this I make two parts. In the first, I tell this imagination in its order; in the second, telling at what point they called me, I thank them at the close; and this part begins here:* “Ye called me.”

XXIV.

After this my vain imagination, it came to pass one day that, as I sat thoughtful in a certain place, I felt a trembling begin in my heart, just as if I had been in the presence of this lady. Then I say that an imagination of Love came to me; for it seemed to me that I saw him coming from that place where my lady dwelt; and it seemed to me that he joyfully said to me in my heart: “Mind thou bless the day on which I took possession of thee, for thou oughtest so to do.” And of a truth it seemed to me that my heart was so gladsome, that it did not seem to me to be my heart, because of its new condition.

And a little after these words which my heart had said to me with the tongue of Love, I saw coming toward me a gentle lady who was famous for her beauty, and who had now long been the lady of him my first friend. And the name of this lady was Joan, but on account of her beauty, as some believe, the name of Primavera [Spring] had been given to her, and thus she was called. And behind her, as I looked, I saw coming the marvellous Beatrice. These ladies passed near me thus one after the other; and it seemed to me that Love spoke to me in my heart, and said: “This first is called Primavera solely because of this coming of to-day; for I moved the giver of the name to call her Primavera, that is to say, *prima verrà* [she will come first] on the day that Beatrice shall show herself after the imagination of her vassal. And if thou wilt further consider her original name, it means the same as Primavera, because her name, Joan, is derived from that John who preceded the true Light, saying, *Ego vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini* [I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord]. And also it seemed to me that after these he said to me other words, namely: “He who should consider subtilely would call that Beatrice *Love*, because of the great likeness she has to me.” Wherefore I, then thinking this over, resolved to write of it in rhyme to my first friend, (keeping silent certain words which it seemed should be kept silent,) for I believed that his heart still admired the beauty of this gentle Primavera. And I devised this sonnet: —

An amorous spirit in my heart that lay
I felt awaken from his slumber there;
And then I saw Love come from far away,
But scarce I knew him, for his joyous air.
“Honor to me,” he said, “think now to pay,”
And with his every word did smiles appear.
Then did my Lord a little with me stay,
And from that part wherefrom he came whilere

I Lady Joan and Lady Bicè see,
    Unto the place approaching where I was;
    One marvel following the other came;
And, as my mind reporteth unto me,
    Love said, “This one is Spring, and this, because
    She so resembleth me, hath Love for name.”

This sonnet has many parts; the first of which tells how I felt the wonted tremor awake in my heart, and how it seemed that Love appeared to me joyous from afar; the second tells how it seemed to me that Love spoke to me in my heart, and what he seemed to me; the third tells how, after he had been thus with me for some time, I saw and heard certain things. The second part begins here: “Honor to me;” *the third, here:* “Then did my Lord.” *The third part is divided into two; in the first, I tell that which I saw; in the second, I tell that which I heard, and it begins:* “Love said.”

XXV.

It may be that some person, entitled to have every doubt cleared away, may here be perplexed at my speaking of Love as if it were a thing in itself, and not only an intellectual substance, but as if it were a corporeal substance. The which thing, in truth, is false, for Love exists not in itself as substance, but is an accident in substance. And that I speak of it as if it were a body, and, further, as if it were a man, appears from three things which I say of it. I say that I saw it come from far off; wherefore, since *coming* implies a local motion, and, according to the Philosopher, only a body is locally movable in itself, it appears that I assume Love to be a body. I say further of it, that it laughed, and also that it spoke, which things appear to be properties of man, especially the faculty of laughing, and thus it appears that I assume that it is a man.

To explain this matter so far as is meet for the present occasion, it must first be understood that formerly there were no rhymers of Love in the vulgar tongue, but certain poets in the Latin tongue were rhymers of Love; among us, I mean, although perchance among other people it happened, and still happens that, as in Greece, not the vulgar, but the lettered poets treated of these things. And no great number of years have passed since these poets in the vulgar tongue first appeared; for to write in rhyme in the vulgar is, after a manner, the same thing as to write in verse in Latin. And the proof that it is but a short time is, that, if we undertake to search in the tongue of the *oco*, and in the tongue of the *sì*, we do not find anything written more than a hundred and fifty years before the present time. And the reason why some illiterate persons acquired the fame of skill in writing verse is, that they were, so to speak, the first who wrote in the tongue of the *sì*. And the first who began to write as a poet in the vulgar tongue was moved to do so because he wished to make his words intelligible to a lady who could not easily understand Latin verses. And this is against those who rhyme on any other them than Love, since this mode of speech was from the beginning invented in order to speak of Love.

It follows that, since a greater license of speech is granted to poets than to writers of prose, and these writers in rhyme are no other than poets using the vulgar tongue, it is fitting and reasonable that greater license of speech should be permitted to them than to the other writers in the vulgar tongue; hence, if any figure or rhetorical coloring is allowed to poets, it is allowed also to the rhymers. Therefore, if we see that the poets have spoken of inanimate things as if they had sense and reason, and have made them speak together, and not only real things, but also things not real (that is, that they have said of things which have no

existence that they speak, and have often made contingent things speak as if they were substances and human beings), it is fitting that the writer in rhyme should do the like, not, indeed, without some reason, but with a reason which it may be possible afterwards to explain in prose.

That the poets have thus spoken as has been said, appears from Virgil, who says that Juno, that is, a goddess hostile to the Trojans, spoke to Æolus, lord of the winds, here, in the first of the Æneid: *Æole, namque tibi, etc.* [Æolus, for to thee, etc.]; and that this lord replied to her, here: *Tuus, O regina, quid optes, etc.* [Thine, O queen, what thou askest, etc.]. In this same poet the inanimate thing speaks to the animate thing, in the third of the Æneid, here: *Dardanidæ duri, etc.* [Ye hardy Trojans, etc.]. In Lucan the animate thing speaks to the inanimate, here: *Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis* [Much dost thou owe, O Rome, to civic arms]. In Horace a man speaks to his own knowledge as to another person; and not only are they the words of Horace, but he says them as the interpreter of the good Homer, here, in his book on Poetry: *Dic mihi, Musa, virum, etc.* [Tell to me, Muse, of the man, etc.]. In Ovid, Love speaks as if he were a human person, at the beginning of the book of the Remedy for Love, here: *Bella mihi, video, bella parantur, ait* [Wars against me, I see, wars are preparing, he says].

And by this the matter may now be clear to any one who is perplexed in any part of this my little book.

And in order that no uncultured person may derive any over-boldness herefrom, I say, that the poets do not speak thus without reason, and that those who rhyme ought not to speak thus, unless they have some reason for what they say; since it would be a great disgrace to him who should rhyme anything under the garb of a figure or of rhetorical coloring, if afterward, being asked, he should not be able to denude his words of this garb, in such wise that they should have a true meaning. And my first friend and I are well acquainted with those who rhyme thus foolishly.

XXVI.

This most gentle lady, of whom there had been discourse in the preceding words, came into such favor among the people, that when she passed along the way, persons ran to see her; which gave me wonderful joy. And when she was near any one, such modesty came into his heart that he dared not raise his eyes, or return her salutation; and of this many, as having experienced it, could bear witness for me to whoso might not believe it. She, crowned and clothed with humility, took her way, showing no pride in that which she saw and heard. Many said, when she had passed: “This is not a woman; rather she is one of the most beautiful angels of heaven.” And others said: “She is a marvel. Blessed be the Lord who can work thus admirably!” I say that she showed herself so gentle and so full of all pleasantness, that those who looked on her comprehended in themselves a pure and sweet delight, such as they could not after tell in words; nor was there any who might look upon her but that at first he needs must sigh. These and more admirable things proceeded from her admirably and with power. Wherefore I, thinking upon this, desiring to resume the style of her praise, resolved to say words in which I would set forth her admirable and excellent influences, to the end that not only those who might actually behold her, but also others, should know of her whatever words could tell. Then I devised this sonnet: —

So gentle and so gracious doth appear
    My lady when she giveth her salute,
    That every tongue becometh, trembling, mute;
    Nor do the eyes to look upon her dare.
Although she hears her praises, she doth go
    Benignly vested with humility;
    And like a thing come down, she seems to be,
    From heaven to earth, a miracle to show.
So pleaseth she whoever cometh nigh,
    She gives the heart a sweetness through the eyes.
    Which none can understand who doth not prove.
And from her countenance there seems to move
    A spirit sweet and in Love’s every guise,
    Who to the soul, in going, sayeth: Sigh!

This sonnet is so easy of understanding, through that which has been told, that it has no need of any division; and therefore, leaving it,

XXVII.

I say that this my lady reached such favor that not only was she honored and praised, but through her were many ladies honored and praised. Wherefore I, seeing this, and wishing to manifest it to whoever saw it not, resolved further to say words in which this should be set forth; and I devised then this other sonnet, which relates how her virtue wrought in other ladies: — All welfare hath he perfectly beheld
Who amid ladies doth my lady see;
And they who go with her are all compelled
Grateful to God for this fair grace to be.
Her beauty of such virtue is indeed,
That it no envy doth in others move;
Rather she makes them with her to proceed,
Clothed on with gentleness and faith and love.
Her sight creates in all humility,
And maketh not herself to please alone,
But each gains honor who to her is nigh.
So gentle in her every act is she,
That she can be recalled to mind by none
Who doth not, in Love's very sweetness, sigh.

This sonnet has three parts: in the first, I tell among what people this lady appeared most admirable; in the second, I tell how gracious was her company; in the third, I tell of those things which she wrought with power in others. The second begins here: "And they who go;" *the third, here:* "Her beauty of such virtue." *This last part is divided into three: in the first, I tell that which she wrought in ladies, namely, as regards themselves; in the second, I tell that which she wrought in them in respect to others; in the third, I tell how she wrought not only in ladies, but in all persons, and how she marvellously wrought not only in presence, but also in memory. The second begins here:* "Her sight;" *the third, here:* "So gentle."

XXVIII.

After this I began to think one day upon what I had said of my lady, that is, in these two preceding sonnets; and seeing in my thought that I had not spoken of that which at the present time she wrought in me, it seemed to me that I had spoken defectively; and therefore I resolved to say words in which I would tell how I seemed to myself to be disposed to her influence, and how her virtue wrought in me. And not believing that I could relate this in the brevity of a sonnet, I began then a canzone which begins: —

So long hath Love retained me at his hest,
And to his sway hath so accustomed me,
That as at first he cruel used to be,
So in my heart he now doth sweetly rest.
Thus when by him my strength is dispossessed,
So that the spirits seem away to flee,
My frail soul feels such sweetness verily,
That with it pallor doth my face invest.
Then Love in me doth with such power prevail,
He makes my sighs in words to take their way;
And they go forth to pray
My lady that she give me grater hale.
Where’er she sees me, this to me occurs;
Nor can it be believed what humbleness is hers.

XXIX.

Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium [How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations].

I was yet full of the design of this canzone, and had completed this above-written stanza thereof, when the Lord of Justice called this most gentle one to glory, under the banner of that Holy Queen Mary, whose name was ever spoken with greatest reverence by this blessed Beatrice.

And although perchance it might be pleasing, were I now to treat somewhat of her departure from us, it is not my intention to treat of it here, for three reasons. The first is, that it is no part of the present design, if we consider the proem which precedes this little book. The second is, that, supposing it did belong to the present design, still my pen would not be sufficient to treat thereof as were meet. The third is, that, supposing both the one and the other, it is not becoming in me to treat thereof, since, in so doing, it would be needful for me to praise myself, — a thing altogether blameworthy in whosoever does it, — and therefore I leave this theme to some other interpreter.

Nevertheless, since the number nine has often found place among the preceding words, which it seems cannot be without some reason, and in her departure this number seems to have occupied a large place, it is befitting to say something on this point, inasmuch as it seems to befit my design. Wherefore I will first tell how it had place in her departure, and then I will assign some reason wherefore this number was so friendly to her.

XXX.

I say that, according to the mode of reckoning in Arabia, her most noble soul departed in the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and, according to the reckoning in Syria, she departed in the ninth month of the year, since the first month there is Tisrin, which with us is October. And according to our reckoning, she departed in that year of our indiction, that is, of the years of the Lord, in which the perfect number was completed for the ninth time in that century in which she had been set in this world: and she was of the Christians of the thirteenth century.

One reason why this number was so friendly to her may be this: since, according to Ptolemy and according to the Christian truth, there are nine heavens which move, and, according to the common astrological opinion, the said heavens work effects here below according to their respective positions, this number was her friend to the end that it might be understood that at her generation all the nine movable heavens were in most perfect relation. This is one reason thereof; but considering more subtilely and according to the infallible truth, this number was she herself; I mean by similitude, and I intend it thus: the number three is the root of nine, for, without any other number, multiplied by itself it makes nine, as we see plainly that three times three make nine. Therefore, since three is the factor by itself of nine, and the Author of miracles by himself is three, namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three and one, this lady was accompanied by the number nine, that it might be understood that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, whose only root is the marvellous Trinity. Perchance even a more subtile reason might be seen herein by a more subtile person; but this is that which I see for it, and which best pleases me.

XXXI.

After the most gentle lady had departed from this world, all the above-mentioned city remained as if a widow, despoiled of every dignity, wherefore I, still weeping in this desolate city, wrote to the chief personages of the land somewhat of its condition, taking that beginning of Jeremiah the prophet, *Quomodo sedet sola civitas!* [How doth the city sit solitary!] And this I tell in order that others may not wonder why I have cited it above, as if for an entrance to the new theme that comes after. And if any one should choose to blame me because I do not write here the words which follow those cited, my excuse is, that from the first it was my design to write nothing except in the vulgar tongue; wherefore, since the words which follow those which have been cited are all Latin, it would be contrary to my design if I should write them; and I know that he, my first friend, for whom I write this, had a similar understanding, namely, that I should write to him only in the vulgar tongue.

XXXII.

After my eyes had wept for some time, and were so wearied that I could not give vent to my sadness, I thought to try to give vent to it with some words of grief; and therefore I resolved to make a canzone, in which, lamenting, I would discourse of her for whom such grief was wasting my soul; and I began then, "*The eyes that grieve*," *etc.*

In order that this canzone may seem to remain the more a widow after its end, I will divide it before I write it out; and this mode I shall follow henceforth. I say that this poor little canzone has three parts: the first is the proem; in the second, I discourse of her; in the third, I speak pitifully to the canzone. The second begins here: "To the high heaven;" *the third, here:* "Sad song of mine." *The first is divided into three: in the first, I tell wherefore I am moved to speak; in the second, I tell to whom I wish to speak; in the third, I tell of whom I wish to speak. The second begins here:* "And since I do remember." *The third, here:* "And then, lamenting." *Then when I say*, "To the high heaven hath Beatricè gone," *I discourse of her; and of this I make two parts. First, I tell the reason wherefore she was taken from us; then I tell how others mourn her departure; and this part begins here:* "Departed from." *This part is divided into three: in the first, I tell who does not mourn for her; in the second, I tell who mourns for her; in the third, I tell of my own condition. The second begins here:* "But he hath grief and woe;" *the third*, "Great anguish." *Then when I say*, "Sad song of mine," *I speak to this my canzone, pointing out to it the ladies to whom it is to go, and with whom it is to stay.*

The eyes that grieve with pity for the heart
Have of their weeping borne the penalty,
So that they now remain as if subdued.
Wherefore if I would to the grief give vent,
Which by degrees conducts me unto death,
Me it behoves to tell my woe in speech.
And since I do remember that I spoke
Of her, my lady, while she was alive,
Ye gentle ladies, willingly with you,
I will not speak of her,
Save only to a lady's gentle heart.
And then, lamenting, I will tell of her,

That she to heaven suddenly hath gone,
And hath left Love behind in grief with me.
To the high heaven hath Beatricè gone,
Unto that realm where peace the angels have,
And dwells with them; you, ladies, hath she left.
No quality of cold ‘t was took her there,
Nor yet of heat, such as affecteth others,
But ‘t was her great benignity alone.
Because the light of her humility
Passed through the heavens with power so great,
It made to marvel the Eternal Lord;
So that a sweet desire
Upon Him came to summon such salvation;
And from below He made her come to Him,
Because He saw that this distressful life
Unworthy was of such a gentle thing.
Departed from her person beautiful,
The gentle soul replete with every grace
Now dwelleth glorious in a fit abode.
Who weeps her not when he doth speak of her
Hath heart of stone so vile and so perverse
Spirit benign can never enter there.
Nor is there wit so high of villain heart
That aught concerning her it can conceive,
Therefore to it comes not the wish to weep.
But he hath grief and woe,
With sighing and with weeping unto death,
And of all comfort is his soul bereft,
Who sometimes in his thought considereth
What she was, and how from us she is taken.
Great anguish do my sighs give unto me,
Whene’er my thought unto my heavy mind
Doth bring her to me who hath cleft my heart.
And thinking oftentimes concerning death,
There comes to me so sweet desire therefor
That it transmutes the color in my face.
When this imagination holds me fixed,
Such pain assaileth me on every side,
That then I tremble with the woe I feel;

And such I do become
That from the people shame takes me away:
Then, alone, weeping, I lamenting call
On Beatrice, and say: “Art thou, then, dead?
And while I call her I am comforted.
The tears of grief, and sighs of agony,
Lay waste my heart whene’er I am alone,
So he would sorrow for it who might see.
And what indeed my life hath been since she,
My lady, to the new world went away.
No tongue there is that could know how to tell.
And therefore, ladies mine, e’en though I wished,
I could not truly tell you what I am.
To me this bitter life such travail brings,
And it is so abased,
That every man who sees my deathlike look
Appears to me to say, “I cast thee off.”
But what I am, that doth my lady see,
And thereof I yet hope reward from her.
Sad song of mine, now weeping go thy way,
And find again the dames and damosels
To whom thy sisters all
Were wont to be the bearers of delight;
And thou who art the daughter of despair,
Go forth disconsolate to dwell with them.

XXXIII.

After this canzone was devised, there came to me one who, according to the degrees of friendship, was my friend next in order after the first; and he was so near in blood to this lady in glory that there was none nearer. And after talking with me, he prayed me to write for him something on a lady who was dead; and he dissembled his words, so that it might seem that he was speaking of another lady who had lately died; but I, aware that he spake only of that blessed one, told him I would do that which his prayer begged of me. Wherefore, after thinking thereupon, I resolved to make a sonnet in which I would somewhat bewail myself, and to give it to this my friend, that it might seem that I had made it for him; and I devised then this sonnet which begins: "*To hearken now*," *etc.*

This sonnet has two parts: in the first, I call upon the liegemen of Love to hearken to me; in the second, I describe my wretched condition. The second begins here: "Sighs which their way."

To hearken now unto my sighs come ye,
O gentle hearts! for pity wills it so; —
Sighs, which their way disconsolately go,
And were they not, I dead of grief should be:
Because my eyes would debtors be to me
For vastly more than they could every pay, —
To weep, alas! my lady in such way,
That, weeping her, my heart relieved might be.
Oft you shall hear them calling unto her,
My gentle lady, who from us is gone
Unto the world deserving of her worth;
And then, in scorn of this life, making moan,
As though the grieving soul itself they were,
Abandoned by its welfare upon earth.

XXXIV.

After I had devised this sonnet, reflecting who he was to whom I intended to give it as if made for him, I saw that the service appeared to me poor and bare for a person so close akin to this lady in glory. And therefore, before I gave him the above-written sonnet, I composed two stanzas of a canzone, the one really for him, and the other for myself; although both the one and the other may appear to him who does not regard subtilely as if written for one person. But he who looks at them subtilely sees well that different persons speak; in that the one does not call her his lady, and the other does so, as is plainly apparent. This canzone and this sonnet I gave to him, saying that I had made them for him alone.

The canzone begins, "As often as," *and has two parts. In one, that is, in the first stanza, this my dear friend, her kinsman, bewails himself; in the other, I bewail myself, that is, in the second stanza, which begins* "And there is intermingled." *And thus it appears that in this canzone two persons bewail themselves, one of whom bewails himself as a brother, the other as a vassal.*

As often as, alas! I call to mind
That I can nevermore
The lady see for whom thus sad I go,
My grieving mind doth cause so great a grief
To gather round my heart,
I say, "My soul, why goest thou not away,
Seeing the torments thou wilt have to bear,
In this world so molestful now to thee,
Make me foreboding with a heavy fear?"
And therefore upon Death
I call, as to my sweet and soft repose,
And say, "Come thou to me," with such desire
That I am envious of whoever dies.
And there is intermingled with my sighs
A sound of wofulness,
Which evermore goes calling upon Death.
To her were all of my desires turned
When that the lady mine
Was overtaken by her cruelty;
Because the pleasure of her beauteousness,

Taking itself away from out our sight,
Became a spiritual beauty great,
Which through the heaven spreads
A light of love that doth the angels greet,
And makes their high and keen intelligence
To marvel, of such gentleness is she.

XXXV.

On that day on which the year was complete since this lady was made one of the denizens of life eternal, I was seated in a place where, having her in mind, I was drawing an angel upon certain tablets. And while I was drawing it, I turned my eyes and saw at my side men to whom it was meet to do honor. They were looking on what I did, and, as was afterwards told me, they had been there already some time before I became aware of it. When I saw them I rose, and, saluting them, said, "Another was just now with me, and on that account I was in thought." And when they had gone away, I returned to my work, namely, that of drawing figures of angels; and, while doing this, a thought came to me of saying words in rhyme, as if for an anniversary poem of her, and of addressing those persons who had come to me. And I devised then this sonnet that begins, "*The gentle lady*," the which has two beginnings; and therefore I will divide it according to one and the other.

I say that, according to the first, this sonnet has three parts: in the first, I tell that this lady was already in my memory; in the second, I tell what Love thereupon did to me; in the third, I tell of the effects of Love. The second begins here: "Love, who;" *the third, here:* "Lamenting they from out." *This part is divided into two: in the one, I say that all my sighs went forth speaking; in the other, I tell how some said certain words different from the others. The second begins here:* "But those." *In this same way it is divided according to the other beginning, except that in the first part I tell when this lady had so come to my mind, and this I do not tell in the other.*

FIRST BEGINNING.

The gentle lady to my mind had come,
Who, for the sake of her exceeding worth,
Had by the Lord Most High been ta'en from earth
To that calm heaven where Mary hath her home.

SECOND BEGINNING.

That gentle lady to my mind in thought
Had come, because of whom Love's tears are shed,
Just at the time when, by her influence led,
To see what I was doing ye were brought.
Love, who within my mind did her perceive,

Was wakened up within my wasted heart,
And said unto my sighs, “Go forth! depart!”
Whereon each one in sorrow took its leave.
Lamenting they from out my breast did go,
And uttering a voice that often led
The grievous tears unto my saddened eyes;
But those which issued with the greatest woe,
”O high intelligence!” they, going, said,
”To-day makes up the year since thou to heaven didst
rise.”

XXXVI.

Some time afterwards, happening to be in a place where I was reminded of the past time, I stood deep in thought, and with such doleful thoughts that they made me exhibit an appearance of terrible distress. Wherefore I, becoming aware of my woe-begone look, lifted up my eyes to see if any one saw me; and I saw a gentle lady, young and very beautiful, who was looking at me from a window with a face full of compassion, so that all pity seemed gathered in it. Wherefore, since the wretched, when they see the compassion of others for them, are the more readily moved to weep, as if taking pity on themselves, I then felt my eyes begin to desire to weep; and therefore, fearing lest I might display my abject life, I departed from before the eyes of this gentle one; and I said then within me: “It cannot be but that with that compassionate lady should be a most noble love.” And therefore I resolved to devise a sonnet in which I would speak to her, and would include all that is narrated in this account. And since this account is manifest enough, I will not divide it.

Mine eyes beheld how you were wont to show
    Great pity on your face, what time your sight
    Fell on the actions and the wretched plight
    To which I ofttimes was reduced by woe.
Then was I ware that you did meditate
    Upon the nature of my darkened years,
    So that within my heart were wakened fears
    Lest that mine eyes should show my low estate.
And then I took myself from you, perceiving
    That tears from out my heart began to move,
    Which by your look had been thus deeply stirred.
Thereon in my sad soul I said this word:
    ”Ah! surely with that lady is that love
    Which maketh me to go about thus grieving.’

XXXVII.

It came to pass afterwards that, wherever this lady saw me, she became of a compassionate aspect and of a pallid color, even as that of love; wherefore I was often reminded of my most noble lady, who had ever showed herself to me of a like color. And ofttimes, in truth, not being able to weep, nor to give vent to my sadness, I sought to see this compassionate lady, who seemed by her look to draw the tears out from my eyes. And therefore the will came to me furthermore to say certain words, speaking to her; and I devised this sonnet which begins, "*Color of Love*," and which is plain without division, through the preceding account.

Color of Love and semblance of compassion
Never so wondrously possession took
Of lady's face, through turning oft her look
On gentle eyes and grievous lamentation,
As now, forsooth, of yours they do, whene'er
You see my countenance with grief o'erwrought;
So that through you comes something to my thought
Which, lest it break my heart, I greatly fear.
I have no power to keep my wasted eyes
From looking oft on you, with the desire
That gaineth them to let their tears o'erflow.
And you increase their wish in such a wise
That with the longing they are all on fire,
But how to weep before you do not know.

XXXVIII.

I was brought to such a pass by the sight of this lady, that my eyes began to delight too much in seeing her; whereas I was often angry with myself, and esteemed myself mean enough. And many a time I cursed the vanity of my eyes, and said to them in my thought: “But late ye were wont to make those weep who saw your sad condition, and now it seems that ye wish to forget it by reason of this lady who looks upon you, and who does not look upon you save as she grieves for the lady in glory for whom ye are wont to weep. But whatever ye have power to do, do; for, accursed eyes, very often will I remind you of her; for never, except after death, ought your tears to be stayed.’ And when I had thus spoken within me to my eyes, very deep and distressful sighs assailed me. And in order that this battle which I had with myself might not remain known only to the wretched one who experienced it, I resolved to make a sonnet, and to include in it this horrible condition; and I devised this which begins, “*The bitter tears*.”

The sonnet has two parts: in the first, I speak to my eyes as my heart spoke within me; in the second, I remove a difficulty, showing who it is that thus speaks; and this part begins here: “Thus saith.” *It might indeed receive still further divisions, but this would be needless, since it is clear by reason of the preceding account.*

The bitter tears that shed by you have been,
Ye eyes of mine, so long a season now,
Have made the tears of other folk to flow,
Out of compassion, as yourselves have seen,
That you would this forget, it now appears,
If on my part so traitorous I should be
As not to trouble you continually
With thought of her to whom belong your tears.
Your vanity doth care in me beget,
And so alarms me, that I greatly dread
Sight of a dame who on you turns her eyes.
Never should you, until that ye be dead,
Our gentle lady who is dead forget:
Thus saith my heart, and thereupon it sighs.

XXXIX.

The sight of this lady brought me into so strange a condition, that many a time I thought of her as of a person who had pleased me exceeding much. And I thought of her thus: “This is a gentle, beautiful, young, and discreet lady, and she has appeared perchance through the will of Love, in order that my life may find repose.” And oftentimes I thought more lovingly, so that my heart consented thereto, that is, unto its reasoning. And when it had thus consented, I took thought again, as if moved by the reason, and I said to myself; “Ah! what thought is this which in so vile a way seeks to console me, and scarcely leaves me any other thought?” Then another thought rose up and said: “Now that thou hast been in so great tribulation, why dost thou not wish to withdraw thyself from such bitterness? Thou seest that this is an inspiration which brings the desires of Love before us, and proceeds from a place no less gentle than the eyes of the lady who has shown herself so compassionate unto thee.” Wherefore I, having thus ofttimes been at strife within me, wished anew to say some words thereof; and since, in the battle of the thoughts, those had conquered that spoke on her behalf, it seemed to me befitting to address her, and I devised this sonnet which begins, “*A gentle thought;*” and I said *gentle* inasmuch as I was speaking to a gentle lady, for otherwise it was most vile.

In this sonnet I make two parts of myself, according as my thoughts had twofold division. The one part I call heart, *that is, the appetite; the other*, soul, *that is, the reason; and I tell how one speaks to the other. And that it is fitting to call the appetite the heart, and the reason the soul, is sufficiently plain to those to whom it pleases me that this should be disclosed. It is true that in the preceding sonnet I take the part of the heart against the eyes, and that seems contrary to what I say in the present; and therefore I say that also there I mean by the heart the appetite, since my desire still to remember me of my most gentle lady was greater than to see this one, although I had had truly some appetite therefor, but it seemed slight; wherefore it appears that the one saying is not contrary to the other.*

This sonnet has three parts: in the first, I begin with saying to this lady how my desire turns wholly toward her; in the second, I say how the soul, that is, the reason, speaks to the heart, that is, to the appetite; in the third, I say how this replies. The second begins here: “Who then is this?” *the third, here:* “O saddened soul!”

A gentle thought that of you holds discourse
Cometh now frequently with me to dwell,
And with such sweetness it of Love doth tell,
My heart to yield unto him it doth force.
“Who then is this,” the soul saith to the heart,
”Who cometh to bring comfort to our mind,
And who hath virtue of so potent kind,
That other thoughts he maketh to depart?”
“O saddened soul,” the heart to her replies,
”This is a little spirit fresh from Love,
And to my presence his desires he brings.
His very life and all his influence move
From out of the compassionating eyes
Of her who sorroweth for our sufferings.’

XL.

Against this adversary of the reason there arose one day, about the hour of nones, a strong imagination within me; for I seemed to see this glorified Beatrice in those crimson garments in which she had first appeared to my eyes, and she seemed to me young, of the same age as when I first saw her. Then I began to think of her; and calling her to mind according to the order of the past time, my heart began bitterly to repent of the desire by which it had so vilely allowed itself for some days to be possessed, contrary to the constancy of the reason: and this so wicked desire being expelled, all my thoughts returned to their most gentle Beatrice. And I say that thenceforth I began to think of her with my heart so all ashamed, that oftentimes my sighs manifested it; for almost all of them told, as they went forth, that which was discoursed of in my heart, to wit, the name of that most gentle one, and how she had departed from us. And many times it came to pass, that some one thought had such anguish in itself that I forgot it and the place where I was. By this rekindling of sighs my tears which had been assuaged were rekindled in such wise that my eyes seemed two things which desired only to weep; and often it happened that through the long continuance of weeping there came a purple color around them, such as is wont to appear after any torment that one may endure; whence it seems that they were worthily rewarded for their vanity, so that from that time forward they could not gaze at any one who might so look at them as to have power to draw them to a like intention. Wherefore I, wishing that this wicked desire and vain temptation should be seen to be destroyed, so that the rhymed words which I had before written should give rise to no question, resolved to make a sonnet in which I would include the purport of this account. And I said then, "*Alas! by force*."

I said "Alas!" *inasmuch as I was ashamed that my eyes had so gone astray after vanity. I do not divide this sonnet, for its meaning is sufficiently clear.*

Alas! by force of sighs that oft return,
Springing from thoughts which are within my heart,
Mine eyes are conquered, and have lost the art
To look at once whose gaze on them may turn.
And they are such, they two desires appear,
Only to weep, and sorrow to display;
And ofttimes they lament in such a way
That Love gives them the martyr's crown to wear.
These thoughts and sighs that issue with my breath,

Become within my heart so full of pain
That Love, subdued by woe, falls senseless there;
For on themselves these grieving ones do bear
That sweet name of my Lady written plain,
And many words relating to her death.

XLI.

After this tribulation it came to pass, at that time when many people were going to see the blessed image which Jesus Christ left to us as the likeness of his most beautiful countenance, which my lady in glory now beholds, that certain pilgrims were passing through a street which is near the middle of that city where the most gentle lady was born, lived, and died; and they were going along, as it seemed to me, very pensive. Wherefore I, thinking on them, said within myself: "These seem to me pilgrims from some far-off region, and I do not believe that they have even heard speak of this lady, and they know nothing of her; nay, their thoughts are rather of other things than of these here; for perchance they are thinking of their distant friends, whom we do not know." Then I said within me: "I know that, if these were from a neighboring land, they would show some sign of trouble as they pass through the midst of the grieving city." Then again I said within me: "If I could hold them awhile, I would indeed make them weep before they should go out from this city; since I would say words which should make whoever might hear them weep."

Wherefore, they having passed out of my sight, I resolved to make a sonnet in which I would set forth that which I had said to myself; and in order that it might appear more piteous, I resolved to say it as if I had spoken to them, and I devised this sonnet which begins, "*O pilgrims*."

I said pilgrims *in the wide sense of the word: for* pilgrims *may be understood in two senses, in one wide and in one narrow. In the wide, forasmuch as every one is a pilgrim who is away from his native land; in the narrow sense, by pilgrim is meant only he who goes to or returns from the House of St. James. And further it is to be known that the folk who journey on the service of the Most High are distinguished by three terms. Those who go beyond the sea, whence they bring back the palm, are called* palmers; *those who go to the House of Galicia are called* pilgrims, *because the burial-place of St. James was more distant from his country than that of any other of the Apostles; and those are called* romers, *who go to Rome, where these whom I call* pilgrims *were going.*

This sonnet is not divided, because it sufficiently declares its own meaning.

O pilgrims, who in pensive mood move slow,
Thinking perchance of those who absent are,
Say, do ye come from folk away so far
As your appearance seems to us to show?

For ye weep not the while ye forward go
    Along the middle of the mourning town;
    Seeming as persons who have nothing known
    Concerning the sad burden of her woe.
If, through your will to hear, awhile ye stay,
    Truly my heart with sighs declares to me
    That ye shall afterward depart in tears.
Alas! her Beatrice now lost hath she;
    And all the words that one of her may say
    Have virtue to make weep whoever hears.

XLII.

After this, two gentle ladies sent to ask me to send to them some of these rhymed words of mine; wherefore I, thinking on their nobleness, resolved to send to them, and to make a new thing which I would send to them with these, in order that I might fulfill their prayers with the more honor. And I devised then a sonnet which relates my condition, and I sent it to them accompanied by the preceding sonnet, and by another which begins, "*To hearken now.*" The sonnet which I made then is, "*Beyond the sphere*," *etc.*

This sonnet has five parts. In the first, I say whither my thought goes, naming it by the name of one of its effects. In the second, I saw wherefore it goes on high, namely, who makes it thus to go. In the third, I say what it sees, namely, a lady in honor. And I call it then a pilgrim spirit; *since spiritually it goes on high, and as a pilgrim who is out of his own country. In the fourth, I say how he sees her such, namely, of such quality, that I cannot understand it; that is to say, that my thought rises into the quality of her to a degree that my understanding cannot comprehend it; since our understanding is in regard to those blessed souls as weak as our eye is before the sun; and this the Philosopher says in the second book of his* Metaphysics. *In the fifth, I say that, although I cannot understand there where my thought transports me, namely, to her marvellous quality, at least I understand this, namely, that this my thought is wholly of my lady, for I often hear her name in my thought. And at the end of this fifth part I say* "Ladies dear," *to indicate that it is to ladies that I speak. The second part beings,* :A new Intelligence;" *the third*, "When at;" *the fourth*, "He sees her such;" *the fifth*, "But at that gentle one." *It might be divided still more subtilely, and its meaning be more fully set forth, but it can pass with this division, and therefore I do not concern myself to divide it further.*

Beyond the sphere that widest orbit hath
Passeth the sigh which issues from my heart:
A new Intelligence doth Love impart
In tears to him, which leads him on his path.
When at the wished-for place his flight he stays,
A lady he beholds in honor dight,
Who so doth shine that through her splendid light
The pilgrim spirit upon her doth gaze.
He sees her such that his reporting words

To me are dark, his speech so subtile is
Unto the grieving heart which makes him tell.
But of that gentle one he speaks, I wis,
Since of the Beatrice’s name records;
Thus, ladies dear, I understand him well.

XLIII.

After this sonnet, a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things which made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one, until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain to this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knows. So that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live, that my life be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman.

And then may it please Him who is the lord of Grace, that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that blessed Beatrice, who in glory looks upon the face of Him *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus* [who is blessed forever].

THE DIVINE COMEDY (VERSE)

Translated by H. F. Cary and Illustrated by Gustave Doré The Divine Comedy is the collective title given to Dante's three-part epic poem that describes the poet's journey through Hell (Inferno), Purgatory and Paradise, guided first by the Roman poet Virgil and then by Beatrice, the poet's beloved heroine of *La Vita Nuova*. Written between 1308 and 1321; the year the poet died, the poem was originally called *Comedìa,* but the epithet 'Divina' was later applied by Giovanni Boccaccio. *The Divine Comedy* is widely regarded as the greatest poetic achievement of Italian literature, portraying an allegorical vision of the Afterlife that offers a treasured insight of the medieval world's view of life and religion.

The epic poem is composed of 14,233 lines, which are divided into the three canticas *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, with each consisting of 33 cantos. An initial canto serves as an introduction to the work and is generally considered to be part of the first cantica, bringing the total number of cantos to 100. The first two cantos serve as a prologue to the epic poem. Throughout the work, the number three is prominent in the work, symbolising God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, represented here by the length of each cantica and the number of parts.

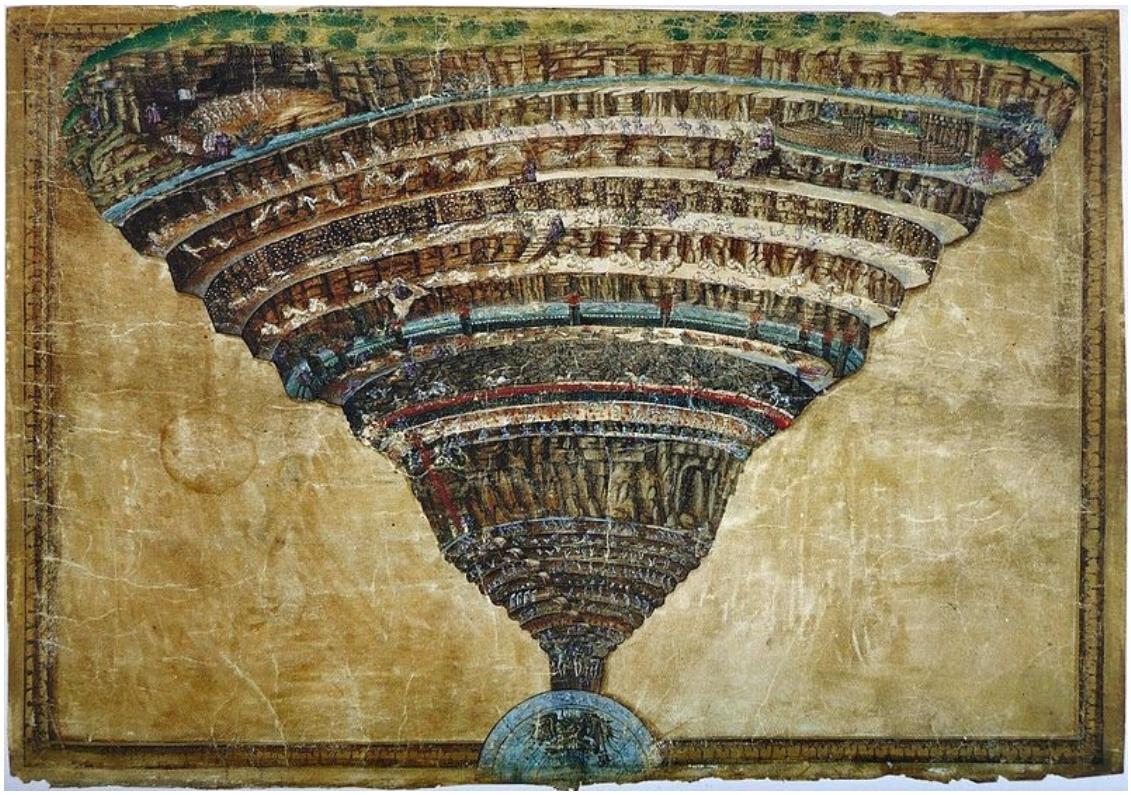
Written in the first person, the poem recounts Dante's journey through the three realms of the dead from the night before Good Friday to the Wednesday after Easter in the spring of 1300. The Roman poet Virgil, a figure believed to have an almost supernatural importance in medieval times, guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory, instructing him of the sins committed by the tormented souls and the punishments that are given to them. However, it is Beatrice, Dante's idealised woman, that guides him through Heaven and the realm of the blessed. Beatrice was a Florentine woman whom the poet had met in childhood and loved with an obsession-like passion, as recounted in *La Vita Nuova*. Tragically Beatrice had died young and divinely pure, serving as the perfect guide to conduct the poet through Paradise.

The Divine Comedy is a work of world literature, inspiring Western Civilisation's views of religion and the artistic portrayal of the Afterlife for centuries. Countless poets and artists from across the world have been influenced by Dante's great epic, illustrating the immense fame and unparalled grace of this Italian masterpiece.

One of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the poem

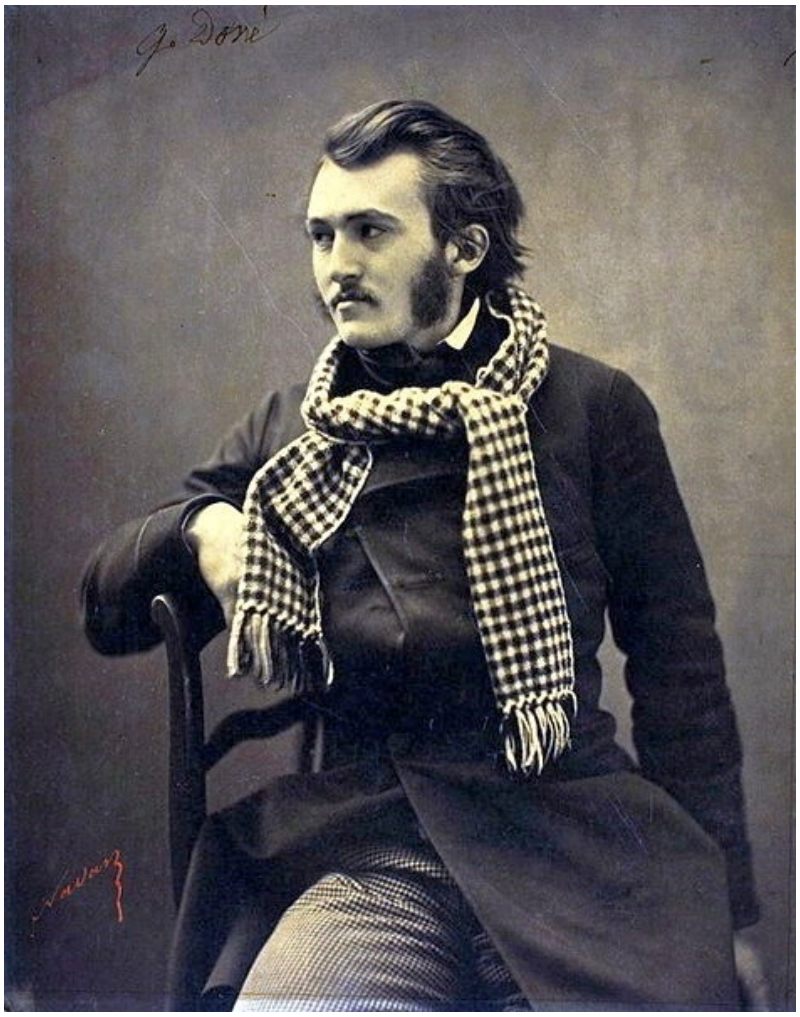
'The Ship of Dante' by Eugène Delacroix, depicting Dante on the left and his guide Virgil on the right

'Dante and his poem', Domenico di Michelino's fresco in the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence 1465



Map of Hell by Sandro Botticelli

Dante and Beatrice speak to Piccarda and Constance of Sicily, in a fresco depicting a scene from the final part of 'The Divine Comedy'



Gustave Doré, the French master illustrator, whose illustrations are among the finest ever created for the epic poem

THE INFERNO

CANTO I

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

IN the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray
Gone from the path direct: and e'en to tell
It were no easy task, how savage wild
That forest, how robust and rough its growth,
Which to remember only, my dismay
Renews, in bitterness not far from death.
Yet to discourse of what there good befell,
All else will I relate discover'd there.
How first I enter'd it I scarce can say,
Such sleepy dullness in that instant weigh'd

My senses down, when the true path I left,
But when a mountain's foot I reach'd, where clos'd
The valley, that had pierc'd my heart with dread,
I look'd aloft, and saw his shoulders broad
Already vested with that planet's beam,
Who leads all wanderers safe through every way.

Then was a little respite to the fear,
That in my heart's recesses deep had lain,
All of that night, so pitifully pass'd:
And as a man, with difficult short breath,
Forespent with toiling, 'scap'd from sea to shore,
Turns to the perilous wide waste, and stands
At gaze; e'en so my spirit, that yet fail'd
Struggling with terror, turn'd to view the straits,
That none hath pass'd and liv'd. My weary frame
After short pause recomforted, again
I journey'd on over that lonely steep,

The hinder foot still firmer. Scarce the ascent
Began, when, lo! a panther, nimble, light,
And cover’d with a speckled skin, appear’d,
Nor, when it saw me, vanish’d, rather strove
To check my onward going; that ofttimes
With purpose to retrace my steps I turn’d.

The hour was morning’s prime, and on his way
Aloft the sun ascended with those stars,
That with him rose, when Love divine first mov’d
Those its fair works: so that with joyous hope
All things conspir’d to fill me, the gay skin
Of that swift animal, the matin dawn
And the sweet season. Soon that joy was chas’d,
And by new dread succeeded, when in view
A lion came, ‘gainst me, as it appear’d,

With his head held aloft and hunger-mad,
That e'en the air was fear-struck. A she-wolf
Was at his heels, who in her leanness seem'd
Full of all wants, and many a land hath made
Disconsolate ere now. She with such fear
O'erwhelmed me, at the sight of her appall'd,
That of the height all hope I lost. As one,
Who with his gain elated, sees the time
When all unwares is gone, he inwardly
Mourns with heart-griping anguish; such was I,
Haunted by that fell beast, never at peace,
Who coming o'er against me, by degrees
Impell'd me where the sun in silence rests.

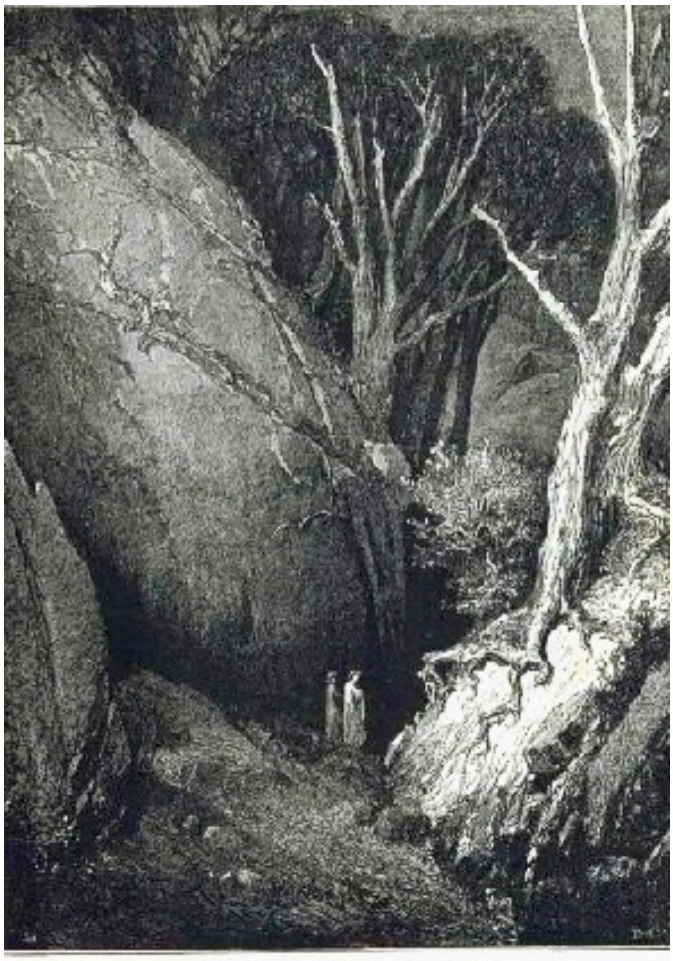
While to the lower space with backward step
I fell, my ken discern'd the form one of one,
Whose voice seem'd faint through long disuse of speech.
When him in that great desert I espied,
"Have mercy on me!" cried I out aloud,
"Spirit! or living man! what e'er thou be!"

He answer'd: "Now not man, man once I was,
And born of Lombard parents, Mantuana both
By country, when the power of Julius yet
Was scarcely firm. At Rome my life was past
Beneath the mild Augustus, in the time
Of fabled deities and false. A bard
Was I, and made Anchises' upright son
The subject of my song, who came from Troy,
When the flames prey'd on Ilium's haughty towers.
But thou, say wherefore to such perils past
Return'st thou? wherefore not this pleasant mount
Ascendest, cause and source of all delight?"
"And art thou then that Virgil, that well-spring,
From which such copious floods of eloquence
Have issued?" I with front abash'd replied.
"Glory and light of all the tuneful train!
May it avail me that I long with zeal
Have sought thy volume, and with love immense
Have conn'd it o'er. My master thou and guide!
Thou he from whom alone I have deriv'd
That style, which for its beauty into fame
Exalts me. See the beast, from whom I fled.
O save me from her, thou illustrious sage!

“For every vein and pulse throughout my frame
She hath made tremble.” He, soon as he saw
That I was weeping, answer’d, “Thou must needs
Another way pursue, if thou wouldst ‘scape
From out that savage wilderness. This beast,
At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none
To pass, and no less hindrance makes than death:
So bad and so accursed in her kind,
That never sated is her ravenous will,
Still after food more craving than before.
To many an animal in wedlock vile
She fastens, and shall yet to many more,
Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain. He will not life support
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,

Wisdom, and virtue, and his land shall be
The land ‘twixt either Feltro. In his might
Shall safety to Italia’s plains arise,
For whose fair realm, Camilla, virgin pure,
Nisus, Euryalus, and Turnus fell.
He with incessant chase through every town
Shall worry, until he to hell at length
Restore her, thence by envy first let loose.
I for thy profit pond’ring now devise,
That thou mayst follow me, and I thy guide
Will lead thee hence through an eternal space,
Where thou shalt hear despairing shrieks, and see
Spirits of old tormented, who invoke
A second death; and those next view, who dwell
Content in fire, for that they hope to come,
Whene’er the time may be, among the blest,
Into whose regions if thou then desire
T’ ascend, a spirit worthier then I
Must lead thee, in whose charge, when I depart,
Thou shalt be left: for that Almighty King,
Who reigns above, a rebel to his law,
Adjudges me, and therefore hath decreed,
That to his city none through me should come.
He in all parts hath sway; there rules, there holds
His citadel and throne. O happy those,
Whom there he chooses!” I to him in few:
“Bard! by that God, whom thou didst not adore,
I do beseech thee (that this ill and worse
I may escape) to lead me, where thou saidst,
That I Saint Peter’s gate may view, and those
Who as thou tell’st, are in such dismal plight.”

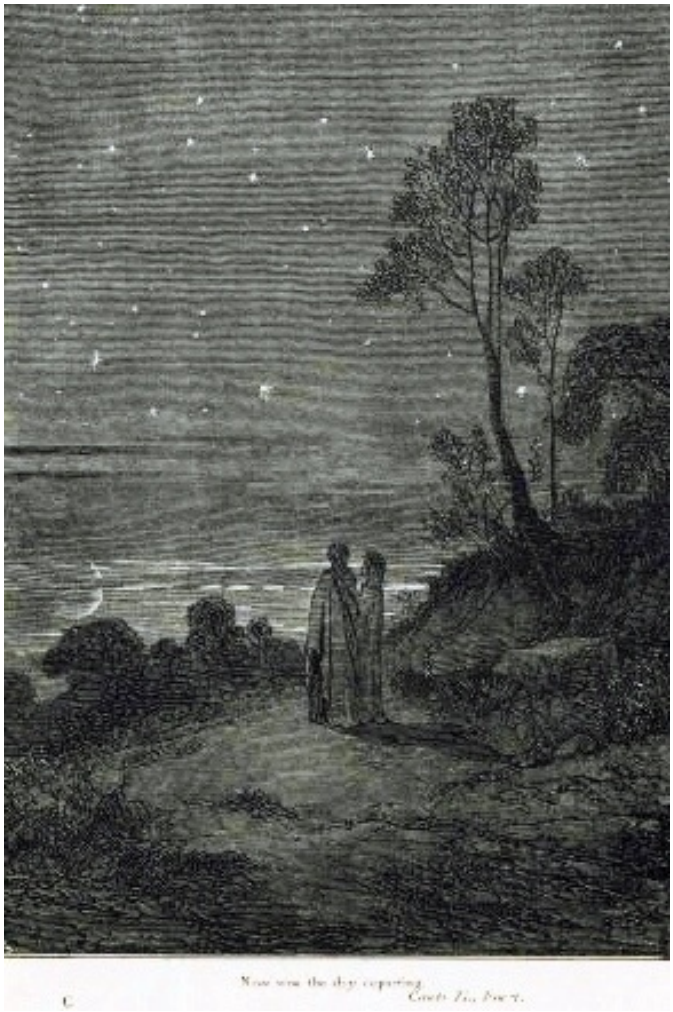
Onward he mov’d, I close his steps pursu’d.



Onward he roved, I close his steps pursued.
Canto I., line 174.

CANTO II

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'



NOW was the day departing, and the air,
Imbrown'd with shadows, from their toils releas'd
All animals on earth; and I alone
Prepar'd myself the conflict to sustain,
Both of sad pity, and that perilous road,
Which my unerring memory shall retrace.

O Muses! O high genius! now vouchsafe
Your aid! O mind! that all I saw hast kept
Safe in a written record, here thy worth
And eminent endowments come to proof.

I thus began: “Bard! thou who art my guide,
Consider well, if virtue be in me
Sufficient, ere to this high enterprise
Thou trust me. Thou hast told that Silvius’ sire,
Yet cloth’d in corruptible flesh, among
Th’ immortal tribes had entrance, and was there
Sensible present. Yet if heaven’s great Lord,
Almighty foe to ill, such favour shew’d,
In contemplation of the high effect,
Both what and who from him should issue forth,
It seems in reason’s judgment well deserv’d:
Sith he of Rome, and of Rome’s empire wide,
In heaven’s empyreal height was chosen sire:
Both which, if truth be spoken, were ordain’d
And ‘stablish’d for the holy place, where sits
Who to great Peter’s sacred chair succeeds.
He from this journey, in thy song renown’d,
Learn’d things, that to his victory gave rise
And to the papal robe. In after-times
The chosen vessel also travel’d there,
To bring us back assurance in that faith,
Which is the entrance to salvation’s way.
But I, why should I there presume? or who
Permits it? not, Aeneas I nor Paul.
Myself I deem not worthy, and none else
Will deem me. I, if on this voyage then
I venture, fear it will in folly end.
Thou, who art wise, better my meaning know’st,
Than I can speak.” As one, who unresolves
What he hath late resolv’d, and with new thoughts
Changes his purpose, from his first intent
Remov’d; e’en such was I on that dun coast,
Wasting in thought my enterprise, at first
So eagerly embrac’d. ”If right thy words
I scan,” replied that shade magnanimous,
“Thy soul is by vile fear assail’d, which oft
So overcasts a man, that he recoils
From noblest resolution, like a beast
At some false semblance in the twilight gloom.

That from this terror thou mayst free thyself,
I will instruct thee why I came, and what
I heard in that same instant, when for thee
Grief touch'd me first. I was among the tribe,
Who rest suspended, when a dame, so blest
And lovely, I besought her to command,
Call'd me; her eyes were brighter than the star
Of day; and she with gentle voice and soft
Angelically tun'd her speech address'd:
"O courteous shade of Mantua! thou whose fame
Yet lives, and shall live long as nature lasts!
A friend, not of my fortune but myself,
On the wide desert in his road has met
Hindrance so great, that he through fear has turn'd.
Now much I dread lest he past help have stray'd,
And I be ris'n too late for his relief,
From what in heaven of him I heard. Speed now,
And by thy eloquent persuasive tongue,
And by all means for his deliverance meet,
Assist him. So to me will comfort spring.
I who now bid thee on this errand forth
Am Beatrice; from a place I come.

(Note: Beatrice. I use this word, as it is
pronounced in the Italian, as consisting of four
syllables, of which the third is a long one.) Revisited with joy. Love brought me thence,
Who prompts my speech. When in my Master's sight
I stand, thy praise to him I oft will tell."

She then was silent, and I thus began:
"O Lady! by whose influence alone,
Mankind excels whatever is contain'd
Within that heaven which hath the smallest orb,
So thy command delights me, that to obey,
If it were done already, would seem late.
No need hast thou farther to speak thy will;
Yet tell the reason, why thou art not loth
To leave that ample space, where to return

To leave that ample space, where to return
Thou burnest, for this centre here beneath."

She then: "Since thou so deeply wouldst inquire,
I will instruct thee briefly, why no dread
Hinders my entrance here. Those things alone
Are to be fear'd, whence evil may proceed,
None else, for none are terrible beside.
I am so fram'd by God, thanks to his grace!
That any suff'rance of your misery
Touches me not, nor flame of that fierce fire
Assails me. In high heaven a blessed dame
Besides, who mourns with such effectual grief
That hindrance, which I send thee to remove,
That God's stern judgment to her will inclines."
To Lucia calling, her she thus bespake:
"Now doth thy faithful servant need thy aid
And I commend him to thee." At her word
Sped Lucia, of all cruelty the foe,
And coming to the place, where I abode
Seated with Rachel, her of ancient days,
She thus address'd me: "Thou true praise of God!
Beatrice! why is not thy succour lent
To him, who so much lov'd thee, as to leave
For thy sake all the multitude admires?
Dost thou not hear how pitiful his wail,
Nor mark the death, which in the torrent flood,
Swoln mightier than a sea, him struggling holds?"
Ne'er among men did any with such speed
Haste to their profit, flee from their annoy,
As when these words were spoken, I came here,
Down from my blessed seat, trusting the force
Of thy pure eloquence, which thee, and all
Who well have mark'd it, into honour brings."

"When she had ended, her bright beaming eyes
Tearful she turn'd aside; whereat I felt
Redoubled zeal to serve thee. As she will'd,
Thus am I come: I sav'd thee from the beast,
Who thy near way across the goodly mount

Prevented. What is this comes o’er thee then?
Why, why dost thou hang back? why in thy breast
Harbour vile fear? why hast not courage there
And noble daring? Since three maids so blest
Thy safety plan, e’en in the court of heaven;
And so much certain good my words forebode.”

As florets, by the frosty air of night
Bent down and clos’d, when day has blanch’d their leaves,
Rise all unfolded on their spiry stems;
So was my fainting vigour new restor’d,
And to my heart such kindly courage ran,
That I as one undaunted soon replied:
“O full of pity she, who undertook
My succour! and thou kind who didst perform
So soon her true behest! With such desire
Thou hast dispos’d me to renew my voyage,
That my first purpose fully is resum’d.
Lead on: one only will is in us both.
Thou art my guide, my master thou, and lord.”

So spake I; and when he had onward mov’d,
I enter’d on the deep and woody way.

CANTO III

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"THROUGH me you pass into the city of woe:
Through me you pass into eternal pain:
Through me among the people lost for aye.
Justice the founder of my fabric mov'd:
To rear me was the task of power divine,
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.

All hope abandon, ye who enter here.
Canto III., line 9.

"All hope abandon ye who enter here."

Such characters in colour dim I mark'd
Over a portal's lofty arch inscrib'd:
Whereat I thus: "Master, these words import

Hard meaning." He as one prepar'd replied:
"Here thou must all distrust behind thee leave;
Here be vile fear extinguish'd. We are come
Where I have told thee we shall see the souls
To misery doom'd, who intellectual good
Have lost." And when his hand he had stretch'd forth
To mine, with pleasant looks, whence I was cheer'd,
Into that secret place he led me on.

Here sighs with lamentations and loud moans
Resounded through the air pierc'd by no star,
That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
With hands together smote that swell'd the sounds,
Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls
Round through that air with solid darkness stain'd,
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.

I then, with error yet encompass'd, cried:
"O master! What is this I hear? What race
Are these, who seem so overcome with woe?"

He thus to me: "This miserable fate
Suffer the wretched souls of those, who liv'd
Without or praise or blame, with that ill band
Of angels mix'd, who nor rebellious prov'd
Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves
Were only. From his bounds Heaven drove them forth,
Not to impair his lustre, nor the depth
Of Hell receives them, lest th' accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain."

I then: "Master! what doth aggrieve them thus,
That they lament so loud?" He straight replied:
"That will I tell thee briefly. These of death
No hope may entertain: and their blind life
So meanly passes, that all other lots
They envy. Fame of them the world hath none,

Nor suffers; mercy and justice scorn them both.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by."

And I, who straightway look'd, beheld a flag,
Which whirling ran around so rapidly,
That it no pause obtain'd: and following came
Such a long train of spirits, I should ne'er
Have thought, that death so many had despoil'd.

When some of these I recogniz'd, I saw
And knew the shade of him, who to base fear
Yielding, abjur'd his high estate. Forthwith
I understood for certain this the tribe
Of those ill spirits both to God displeasing
And to his foes. These wretches, who ne'er lived,
Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung
By wasps and hornets, which bedew'd their cheeks
With blood, that mix'd with tears dropp'd to their feet,
And by disgustful worms was gather'd there.

Then looking farther onwards I beheld
A throng upon the shore of a great stream:
Whereat I thus: "Sir! grant me now to know
Whom here we view, and whence impell'd they seem
So eager to pass o'er, as I discern
Through the blear light?" He thus to me in few:
"This shalt thou know, soon as our steps arrive
Beside the woeful tide of Acheron."

Then with eyes downward cast and fill'd with shame,
Fearing my words offensive to his ear,
Till we had reach'd the river, I from speech
Abstain'd. And lo! toward us in a bark
Comes on an old man hoary white with eld,

Crying, “Woe to you wicked spirits! hope not
Ever to see the sky again. I come
To take you to the other shore across,
Into eternal darkness, there to dwell
In fierce heat and in ice. And thou, who there
Standest, live spirit! get thee hence, and leave
These who are dead.” But soon as he beheld
I left them not, “By other way,” said he,
“By other haven shalt thou come to shore,
Not by this passage; thee a nimbler boat
Must carry.” Then to him thus spake my guide:
“Charon! thyself torment not: so ‘t is will’d,
Where will and power are one: ask thou no more.”

Straightway in silence fell the shaggy cheeks
Of him the boatman o'er the livid lake,
Around whose eyes glar'd wheeling flames. Meanwhile
Those spirits, faint and naked, color chang'd,
And gnash'd their teeth, soon as the cruel words
They heard. God and their parents they blasphem'd,
The human kind, the place, the time, and seed
That did engender them and give them birth.

Then all together sorely wailing drew
To the curs'd strand, that every man must pass
Who fears not God. Charon, demoniac form,
With eyes of burning coal, collects them all,
Beck'ning, and each, that lingers, with his oar
Strikes. As fall off the light autumnal leaves,
One still another following, till the bough
Strews all its honours on the earth beneath;

Even in like manner Adam's evil brood
Cast themselves, one by one, down from the shore.
Canto III., lines 107, 108.

E’en in like manner Adam’s evil brood
Cast themselves one by one down from the shore,
Each at a beck, as falcon at his call.

Thus go they over through the umber’d wave,
And ever they on the opposing bank
Be landed, on this side another throng
Still gathers. ”Son,” thus spake the courteous guide,
“Those, who die subject to the wrath of God,
All here together come from every clime,
And to o’erpass the river are not loth:
For so heaven’s justice goads them on, that fear
Is turn’d into desire. Hence ne’er hath past
Good spirit. If of thee Charon complain,
Now mayst thou know the import of his words.”

This said, the gloomy region trembling shook
So terribly, that yet with clammy dews
Fear chills my brow. The sad earth gave a blast,
That, lightening, shot forth a vermilion flame,
Which all my senses conquer’d quite, and I
Down dropp’d, as one with sudden slumber seiz’d.

CANTO IV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

BROKE the deep slumber in my brain a crash
Of heavy thunder, that I shook myself,
As one by main force rous'd. Risen upright,
My rested eyes I mov'd around, and search'd
With fixed ken to know what place it was,
Wherein I stood. For certain on the brink
I found me of the lamentable vale,
The dread abyss, that joins a thund'rous sound
Of plaints innumerable. Dark and deep,
And thick with clouds o'erspread, mine eye in vain
Explor'd its bottom, nor could aught discern.

"Now let us to the blind world there beneath
Descend;" the bard began all pale of look:
"I go the first, and thou shalt follow next."

Then I his alter'd hue perceiving, thus:
"How may I speed, if thou yieldest to dread,
Who still art wont to comfort me in doubt?"

He then: "The anguish of that race below
With pity stains my cheek, which thou for fear
Mistakest. Let us on. Our length of way
Urges to haste." Onward, this said, he mov'd;
And ent'ring led me with him on the bounds
Of the first circle, that surrounds th' abyss.
Here, as mine ear could note, no plaint was heard
Except of sighs, that made th' eternal air
Tremble, not caus'd by tortures, but from grief
Felt by those multitudes, many and vast,
Of men, women, and infants. Then to me
The gentle guide: "Inquir'st thou not what spirits
Are these, which thou beholdest? Ere thou pass
Farther, I would thou know, that these of sin
Were blameless; and if aught they merited,

It profits not, since baptism was not theirs,
The portal to thy faith. If they before
The Gospel liv'd, they serv'd not God aright;
And among such am I. For these defects,
And for no other evil, we are lost;

"Only so far afflicted, that we live
Desiring without hope." So grief assail'd
My heart at hearing this, for well I knew
Suspended in that Limbo many a soul
Of mighty worth. "O tell me, sire rever'd!
Tell me, my master!" I began through wish
Of full assurance in that holy faith,
Which vanquishes all error; "say, did e'er
Any, or through his own or other's merit,
Come forth from thence, whom afterward was blest?"

Piercing the secret purport of my speech,
He answer'd: "I was new to that estate,
When I beheld a puissant one arrive
Amongst us, with victorious trophy crown'd.
He forth the shade of our first parent drew,
Abel his child, and Noah righteous man,
Of Moses lawgiver for faith approv'd,
Of patriarch Abraham, and David king,
Israel with his sire and with his sons,
Nor without Rachel whom so hard he won,
And others many more, whom he to bliss
Exalted. Before these, be thou assur'd,
No spirit of human kind was ever sav'd."

We, while he spake, ceas'd not our onward road,
Still passing through the wood; for so I name
Those spirits thick beset. We were not far
On this side from the summit, when I kenn'd
A flame, that o'er the darken'd hemisphere
Prevailing shin'd. Yet we a little space
Were distant, not so far but I in part
Discover'd, that a tribe in honour high
That place possess'd. "O thou, who every art
And science valu'st! who are these, that boast
Such honour, separate from all the rest?"

He answer'd: "The renown of their great names
That echoes through your world above, acquires
Favour in heaven, which holds them thus advanc'd."
Meantime a voice I heard: "Honour the bard
Sublime! his shade returns that left us late!"
No sooner ceas'd the sound, than I beheld
Four mighty spirits toward us bend their steps,
Of semblance neither sorrowful nor glad.

When thus my master kind began: "Mark him,
Who in his right hand bears that falchion keen,
The other three preceding, as their lord.
This is that Homer, of all bards supreme:
Flaccus the next in satire's vein excelling;

Flaccus the next in satire's vein excelling,
The third is Naso; Lucan is the last.
Because they all that appellation own,
With which the voice singly accosted me,
Honouring they greet me thus, and well they judge."

So I beheld united the bright school
Of him the monarch of sublimest song,
That o'er the others like an eagle soars.
When they together short discourse had held,
They turn'd to me, with salutation kind
Beck'ning me; at the which my master smil'd:
Nor was this all; but greater honour still
They gave me, for they made me of their tribe;
And I was sixth amid so learn'd a band.

Far as the luminous beacon on we pass'd
Speaking of matters, then befitting well
To speak, now fitter left untold. At foot
Of a magnificent castle we arriv'd,
Seven times with lofty walls begirt, and round
Defended by a pleasant stream. O'er this
As o'er dry land we pass'd. Next through seven gates
I with those sages enter'd, and we came
Into a mead with lively verdure fresh.

There dwelt a race, who slow their eyes around
Majestically mov'd, and in their port
Bore eminent authority; they spake
Seldom, but all their words were tuneful sweet.

We to one side retir'd, into a place
Open and bright and lofty, whence each one
Stood manifest to view. Incontinent
There on the green enamel of the plain
Were shown me the great spirits, by whose sight
I am exalted in my own esteem.

Electra there I saw accompanied
By many, among whom Hector I knew,
Anchises' pious son, and with hawk's eye
Caesar all arm'd, and by Camilla there
Penthesilea. On the other side
Old King Latinus, seated by his child
Lavinia, and that Brutus I beheld,
Who Tarquin chas'd, Lucretia, Cato's wife
Marcia, with Julia and Cornelia there;
And sole apart retir'd, the Soldan fierce.

Then when a little more I rais'd my brow,
I spied the master of the sapient throng,
Seated amid the philosophic train.
Him all admire, all pay him rev'rence due.
There Socrates and Plato both I mark'd,
Nearest to him in rank; Democritus,

Who sets the world at chance, Diogenes,
With Heraclitus, and Empedocles,
And Anaxagoras, and Thales sage,
Zeno, and Dioscorides well read
In nature's secret lore. Orpheus I mark'd
And Linus, Tully and moral Seneca,
Euclid and Ptolemy, Hippocrates,
Galenus, Avicen, and him who made
That commentary vast, Averroes.

Of all to speak at full were vain attempt;
For my wide theme so urges, that ofttimes
My words fall short of what bechanc'd. In two
The six associates part. Another way
My sage guide leads me, from that air serene,
Into a climate ever vex'd with storms:
And to a part I come where no light shines.

CANTO V

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

FROM the first circle I descended thus
Down to the second, which, a lesser space
Embracing, so much more of grief contains
Provoking bitter moans. There, Minos stands
Grinning with ghastly feature: he, of all
Who enter, strict examining the crimes,

There Minos stands. Canto V., line 4.

Gives sentence, and dismisses them beneath,
According as he foldeth him around:
For when before him comes th' ill fated soul,
It all confesses; and that judge severe
Of sins, considering what place in hell
Suits the transgression, with his tail so oft

Himself encircles, as degrees beneath
He dooms it to descend. Before him stand
Always a num'rous throng; and in his turn
Each one to judgment passing, speaks, and hears
His fate, thence downward to his dwelling hurl'd.

"O thou! who to this residence of woe
Approachest?" when he saw me coming, cried
Minos, relinquishing his dread employ,
"Look how thou enter here; beware in whom
Thou place thy trust; let not the entrance broad
Deceive thee to thy harm." To him my guide:
"Wherefore exclaimest? Hinder not his way
By destiny appointed; so 'tis will'd
Where will and power are one. Ask thou no more."

Now 'gin the rueful wailings to be heard.
Now am I come where many a plaining voice
Smites on mine ear. Into a place I came
Where light was silent all. Bellowing there groan'd
A noise as of a sea in tempest torn
By warring winds. The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on
Whirl'd round and dash'd amain with sore annoy.

The stormy blast of hell
With endless fury drives the spirits &c.
Canto V. lines 31 33

When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,
There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,
And blasphemies ‘gainst the good Power in heaven.

I understood that to this torment sad
The carnal sinners are condemn’d, in whom
Reason by lust is sway’d. As in large troops
And multitudinous, when winter reigns,
The starlings on their wings are borne abroad;
So bears the tyrannous gust those evil souls.
On this side and on that, above, below,
It drives them: hope of rest to solace them
Is none, nor e’en of milder pang. As cranes,
Chanting their dol’rous notes, traverse the sky,
Stretch’d out in long array: so I beheld

Spirits, who came loud wailing, hurried on
By their dire doom. Then I: “Instructor! who
Are these, by the black air so scourg’d?”— “The first
‘Mong those, of whom thou question’st,” he replied,
“O’er many tongues was empress. She in vice
Of luxury was so shameless, that she made
Liking be lawful by promulg’d decree,
To clear the blame she had herself incurr’d.
This is Semiramis, of whom ’tis writ,
That she succeeded Ninus her espous’d;
And held the land, which now the Soldan rules.
The next in amorous fury slew herself,
And to Sicheus’ ashes broke her faith:
Then follows Cleopatra, lustful queen.”

There mark’d I Helen, for whose sake so long
The time was fraught with evil; there the great
Achilles, who with love fought to the end.
Paris I saw, and Tristan; and beside
A thousand more he show’d me, and by name
Pointed them out, whom love bereav’d of life.

When I had heard my sage instructor name
Those dames and knights of antique days, o’erpower’d
By pity, well-nigh in amaze my mind
Was lost; and I began: “Bard! willingly
I would address those two together coming,
Which seem so light before the wind.” He thus:
“Note thou, when nearer they to us approach.

“Then by that love which carries them along,
Entreat; and they will come.” Soon as the wind
Sway’d them toward us, I thus fram’d my speech:
“O wearied spirits! come, and hold discourse
With us, if by none else restrain’d.” As doves
By fond desire invited, on wide wings
And firm, to their sweet nest returning home,
Cleave the air, wafted by their will along;
Thus issu’d from that troop, where Dido ranks,
They through the ill air speeding; with such force
My cry prevail’d by strong affection urg’d.

“O gracious creature and benign! who go’st
Visiting, through this element obscure,
Us, who the world with bloody stain imbru’d;

If for a friend the King of all we own'd,
Our pray'r to him should for thy peace arise,
Since thou hast pity on our evil plight.
()f whatsoe'er to hear or to discourse
It pleases thee, that will we hear, of that
Freely with thee discourse, while e'er the wind,
As now, is mute. The land, that gave me birth,
Is situate on the coast, where Po descends
To rest in ocean with his sequent streams.

"Love, that in gentle heart is quickly learnt,
Entangled him by that fair form, from me
Ta'en in such cruel sort, as grieves me still:
Love, that denial takes from none belov'd,
Caught me with pleasing him so passing well,
That, as thou see'st, he yet deserts me not.

Love brought us to one death: Caina waits
The soul who split our life.

“Love brought us to one death: Caina waits
The soul, who spilt our life.” Such were their words;
At hearing which downward I bent my looks,
And held them there so long, that the bard cried:
“What art thou pond’ring?” I in answer thus:
“Alas! by what sweet thoughts, what fond desire
Must they at length to that ill pass have reach’d!”

Then turning, I to them my speech address’d.
And thus began: “Francesca! your sad fate
Even to tears my grief and pity moves.
But tell me; in the time of your sweet sighs,
By what, and how love granted, that ye knew
Your yet uncertain wishes?” She replied:
“No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when mis’ry is at hand! That kens
Thy learn’d instructor. Yet so eagerly
If thou art bent to know the primal root,
From whence our love gat being, I will do,
As one, who weeps and tells his tale. One day
For our delight we read of Lancelot,
How him love thrall’d. Alone we were, and no
Suspicion near us. Ofttimes by that reading
Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
Fled from our alter’d cheek. But at one point
Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
The wished smile, rapturously kiss’d
By one so deep in love, then he, who ne’er
From me shall separate, at once my lips
All trembling kiss’d. The book and writer both
Were love’s purveyors. In its leaves that day
We read no more.” While thus one spirit spake,
The other wail’d so sorely, that heartstruck
I through compassion fainting, seem’d not far
From death, and like a corpse fell to the ground.

In the arms that day
We read no more.

Carew 1st, *Lines* 154 - 15.

I, through compassion fainting, seem'd not far
From death, and like a corse fell to the ground.
Canto V., lines 137, 138.

CANTO VI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

MY sense reviving, that erewhile had droop'd
With pity for the kindred shades, whence grief
O'ercame me wholly, straight around I see
New torments, new tormented souls, which way
Soe'er I move, or turn, or bend my sight.
In the third circle I arrive, of show'rs
Ceaseless, accursed, heavy, and cold, unchang'd
For ever, both in kind and in degree.
Large hail, discolour'd water, sleety flaw
Through the dun midnight air stream'd down amain:
Stank all the land whereon that tempest fell.

Cerberus, cruel monster, fierce and strange,
Through his wide threefold throat barks as a dog
Over the multitude immers'd beneath.
His eyes glare crimson, black his unctuous beard,
His belly large, and claw'd the hands, with which
He tears the spirits, flays them, and their limbs
Piecemeal disparts. Howling there spread, as curs,
Under the rainy deluge, with one side
The other screening, oft they roll them round,
A wretched, godless crew. When that great worm
Descried us, savage Cerberus, he op'd
His jaws, and the fangs show'd us; not a limb
Of him but trembled. Then my guide, his palms
Expanding on the ground, thence filled with earth
Rais'd them, and cast it in his ravenous maw.

Then my guide, his palms
Expanding on the ground, thence fill'd with earth
Raised them, and cast it in his ravenous maw.
Canto VI., lines 24—26.

E'en as a dog, that yelling bays for food
His keeper, when the morsel comes, lets fall
His fury, bent alone with eager haste
To swallow it; so dropp'd the loathsome cheeks
Of demon Cerberus, who thund'ring stuns
The spirits, that they for deafness wish in vain.

We, o'er the shades thrown prostrate by the brunt
Of the heavy tempest passing, set our feet
Upon their emptiness, that substance seem'd.

They all along the earth extended lay
Save one, that sudden rais'd himself to sit,
Soon as that way he saw us pass. "O thou!"
He cried, "who through the infernal shades art led,
Own, if again thou know'st me. Thou wast fram'd
Or ere my frame was broken." I replied:

“The anguish thou endur’st perchance so takes
Thy form from my remembrance, that it seems
As if I saw thee never. But inform
Me who thou art, that in a place so sad
Art set, and in such torment, that although
Other be greater, more disgustful none
Can be imagin’d.” He in answer thus:

“Thy city heap’d with envy to the brim,
Ay that the measure overflows its bounds,
Held me in brighter days. Ye citizens
Were wont to name me Ciacco. For the sin
Of glutt’ny, damned vice, beneath this rain,
E’en as thou see’st, I with fatigue am worn;
Nor I sole spirit in this woe: all these
Have by like crime incurr’d like punishment.”

No more he said, and I my speech resum'd:
"Ciacco! thy dire affliction grieves me much,
Even to tears. But tell me, if thou know'st,
What shall at length befall the citizens
Of the divided city; whether any just one
Inhabit there: and tell me of the cause,
Whence jarring discord hath assail'd it thus?"

He then: "After long striving they will come
To blood; and the wild party from the woods
Will chase the other with much injury forth.
Then it behoves, that this must fall, within
Three solar circles; and the other rise
By borrow'd force of one, who under shore
Now rests. It shall a long space hold aloof
Its forehead, keeping under heavy weight
The other oppress'd, indignant at the load,
And grieving sore. The just are two in number,
But they neglected. Av'rice, envy, pride,
Three fatal sparks, have set the hearts of all
On fire." Here ceas'd the lamentable sound;
And I continu'd thus: "Still would I learn
More from thee, farther parley still entreat.
Of Farinata and Tegghiaio say,
They who so well deserv'd, of Giacopo,
Arrigo, Mosca, and the rest, who bent
Their minds on working good. Oh! tell me where
They bide, and to their knowledge let me come.
For I am press'd with keen desire to hear,
If heaven's sweet cup or poisonous drug of hell
Be to their lip assign'd." He answer'd straight:
"These are yet blacker spirits. Various crimes
Have sunk them deeper in the dark abyss.
If thou so far descendest, thou mayst see them.
But to the pleasant world when thou return'st,
Of me make mention, I entreat thee, there.
No more I tell thee, answer thee no more."

This said, his fixed eyes he turn'd askance,
A little on'd me, then bent down his head

A little ey'd me, then bent down his head,
And 'midst his blind companions with it fell.

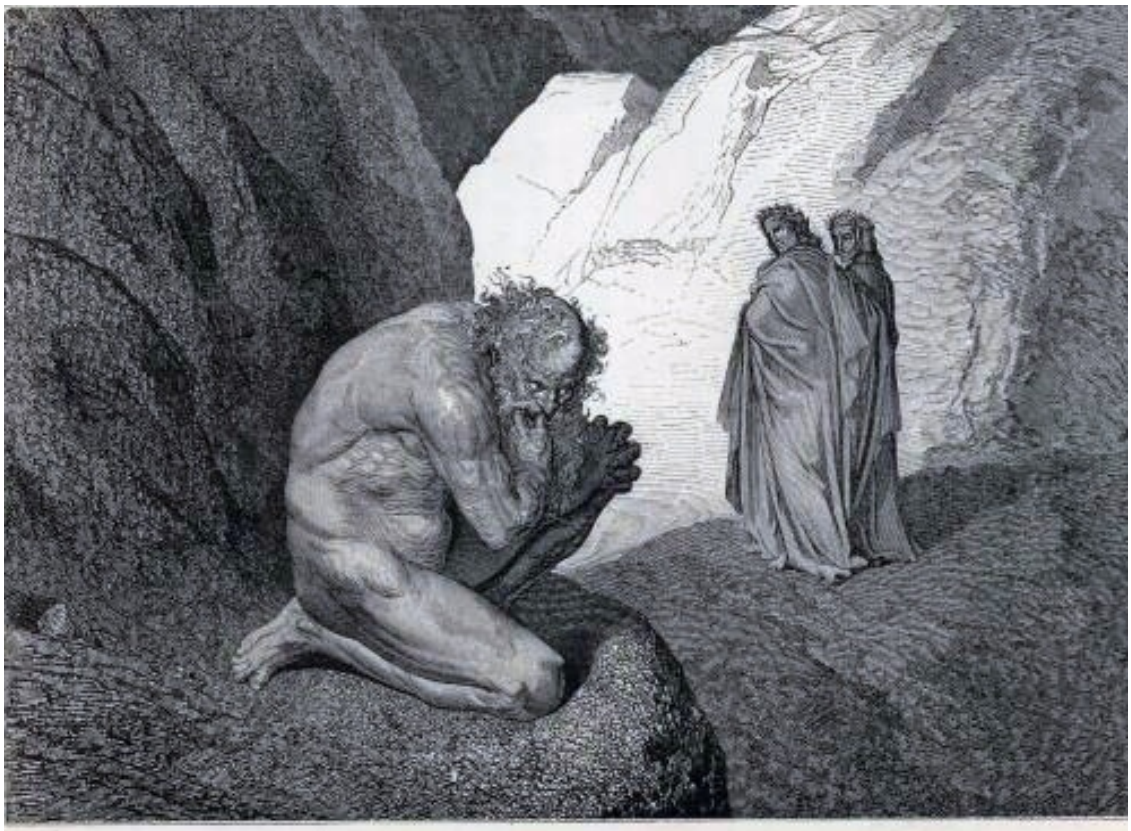
When thus my guide: "No more his bed he leaves,
Ere the last angel-trumpet blow. The Power
Adverse to these shall then in glory come,
Each one forthwith to his sad tomb repair,
Resume his fleshly vesture and his form,
And hear the eternal doom re-echoing rend
The vault." So pass'd we through that mixture foul
Of spirits and rain, with tardy steps; meanwhile
Touching, though slightly, on the life to come.
For thus I question'd: "Shall these tortures, Sir!
When the great sentence passes, be increas'd,
Or mitigated, or as now severe?"

He then: "Consult thy knowledge; that decides
That as each thing to more perfection grows,
It feels more sensibly both good and pain.
Though ne'er to true perfection may arrive
This race accurs'd, yet nearer then than now
They shall approach it." Compassing that path
Circuitous we journeyed, and discourse
Much more than I relate between us pass'd:
Till at the point, where the steps led below,
Arriv'd, there Plutus, the great foe, we found.

CANTO VII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"AH me! O Satan! Satan!" loud exclaim'd
Plutus, in accent hoarse of wild alarm:
And the kind sage, whom no event surpris'd,
To comfort me thus spake: "Let not thy fear
Harm thee, for power in him, be sure, is none
To hinder down this rock thy safe descent."
Then to that sworn lip turning, "Peace!" he cried,



Curst wolf! thy fury inward on thyself
Prey; and consume thee!
Canto VII., lines 8, 9.

"Curs'd wolf! thy fury inward on thyself
Prey, and consume thee! Through the dark profound
Not without cause he passes. So 't is will'd
On high, there where the great Archangel pour'd
Heav'n's vengeance on the first adulterer proud."

As sails full spread and bellying with the wind
Drop suddenly collaps'd, if the mast split;
So to the ground down dropp'd the cruel fiend.

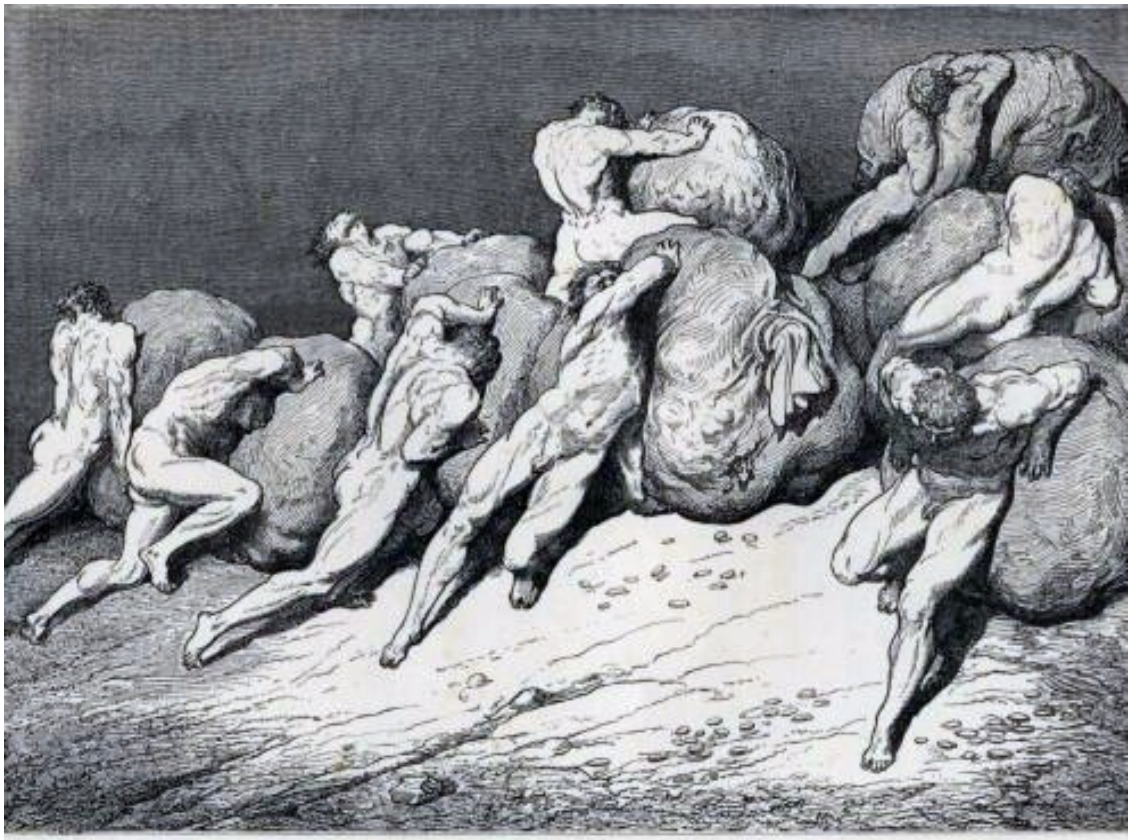
Thus we, descending to the fourth steep ledge,
Gain'd on the dismal shore, that all the woe
Hems in of all the universe. Ah me!
Almighty Justice! in what store thou heap'st
New pains, new troubles, as I here beheld!
Wherefore doth fault of ours bring us to this?

E'en as a billow, on Charybdis rising,
Against encounter'd billow dashing breaks;
Such is the dance this wretched race must lead,
Whom more than elsewhere numerous here I found,
From one side and the other, with loud voice,
Both roll'd on weights by main forge of their breasts,
Then smote together, and each one forthwith
Roll'd them back voluble, turning again,
Exclaiming these, "Why holdest thou so fast?"
Those answering, "And why castest thou away?"
So still repeating their despiteful song,
They to the opposite point on either hand
Travers'd the horrid circle: then arriv'd,
Both turn'd them round, and through the middle space
Conflicting met again. At sight whereof
I, stung with grief, thus spake: "O say, my guide!
What race is this? Were these, whose heads are shorn,
On our left hand, all sep'rate to the church?"

He straight replied: "In their first life these all
In mind were so distorted, that they made,
According to due measure, of their wealth,
No use. This clearly from their words collect,
Which they howl forth, at each extremity
Arriving of the circle, where their crime
Contrary' in kind disparts them. To the church
Were separate those, that with no hairy cowls

Are crown’d, both Popes and Cardinals, o’er whom
Av’rice dominion absolute maintains.”

I then: “Mid such as these some needs must be,
Whom I shall recognize, that with the blot
Of these foul sins were stain’d.” He answering thus:
“Vain thought conceiv’st thou. That ignoble life,
Which made them vile before, now makes them dark,
And to all knowledge indiscernible.
Forever they shall meet in this rude shock:
These from the tomb with clenched grasp shall rise,
Those with close-shaven locks. That ill they gave,
And ill they kept, hath of the beauteous world
Depriv’d, and set them at this strife, which needs
No labour’d phrase of mine to set if off.
Now may’st thou see, my son! how brief, how vain,
The goods committed into fortune’s hands,
For which the human race keep such a coil!
Not all the gold, that is beneath the moon,
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls
Might purchase rest for one.” I thus rejoin’d:



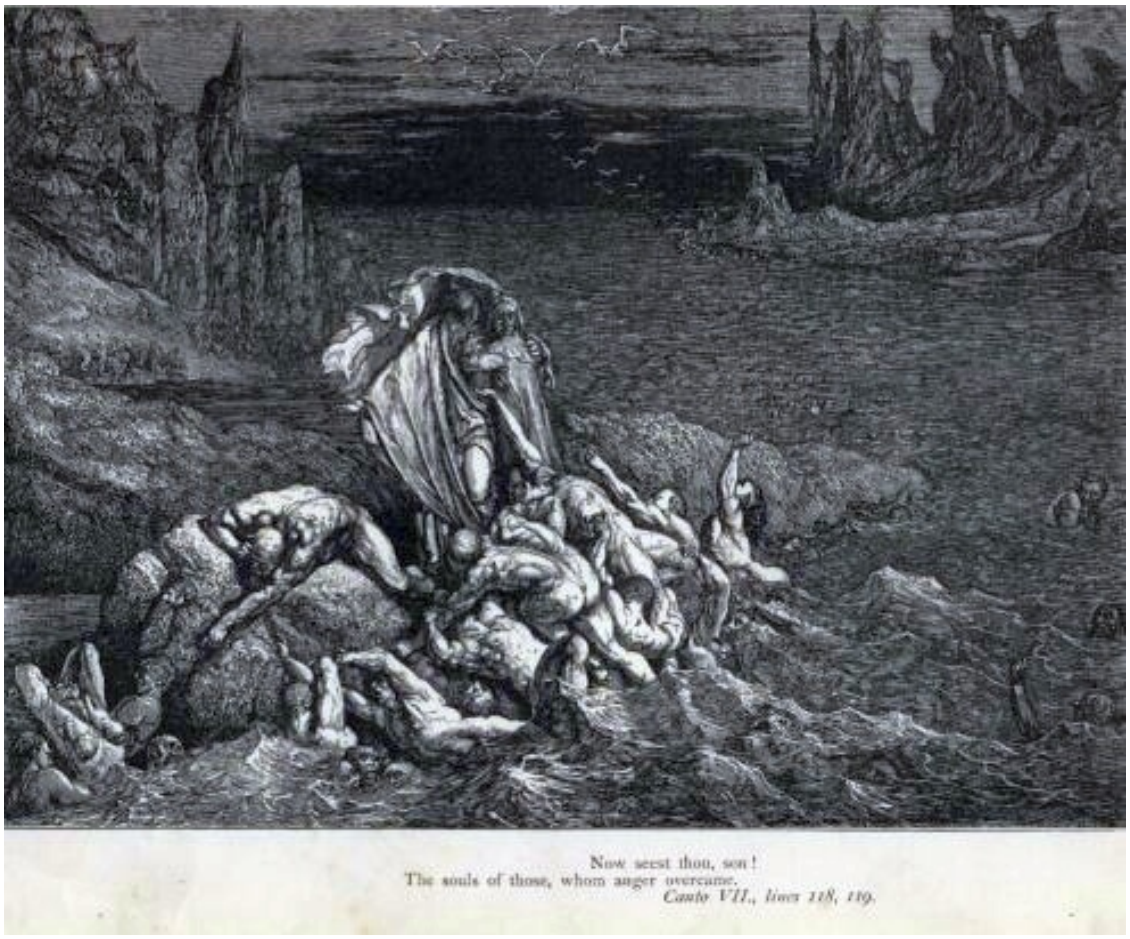
Not all the gold that is beneath the moon,
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls
Might purchase rest for one.

Canto VII., lines 65—67.

“My guide! of thee this also would I learn;
This fortune, that thou speak’st of, what it is,
Whose talons grasp the blessings of the world?”

He thus: “O beings blind! what ignorance
Besets you? Now my judgment hear and mark.
He, whose transcendent wisdom passes all,
The heavens creating, gave them ruling powers
To guide them, so that each part shines to each,
Their light in equal distribution pour’d.
By similar appointment he ordain’d
Over the world’s bright images to rule.
Superintendence of a guiding hand
And general minister, which at due time
May change the empty vantages of life
From race to race, from one to other’s blood,
Beyond prevention of man’s wisest care:

Wherefore one nation rises into sway,
Another languishes, e'en as her will
Decrees, from us conceal'd, as in the grass
The serpent train. Against her nought avails
Your utmost wisdom. She with foresight plans,
Judges, and carries on her reign, as theirs
The other powers divine. Her changes know
Nore intermission: by necessity
She is made swift, so frequent come who claim
Succession in her favours. This is she,
So execrated e'en by those, whose debt
To her is rather praise; they wrongfully
With blame requite her, and with evil word;
But she is blessed, and for that recks not:
Amidst the other primal beings glad
Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults.
Now on our way pass we, to heavier woe
Descending: for each star is falling now,
That mounted at our entrance, and forbids
Too long our tarrying." We the circle cross'd
To the next steep, arriving at a well,
That boiling pours itself down to a foss
Sluic'd from its source. Far murkier was the wave
Than sablest grain: and we in company
Of the' inky waters, journeying by their side,
Enter'd, though by a different track, beneath.
Into a lake, the Stygian nam'd, expands
The dismal stream, when it hath reach'd the foot
Of the grey wither'd cliffs. Intent I stood
To gaze, and in the marish sunk descried
A miry tribe, all naked, and with looks
Betok'ning rage. They with their hands alone
Struck not, but with the head, the breast, the feet,
Cutting each other piecemeal with their fangs.



Now seest thou, son!
The souls of those, whom anger overcame.
Canto VII., lines 118, 119.

The good instructor spake; “Now seest thou, son!
The souls of those, whom anger overcame.
This too for certain know, that underneath
The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
As thine eye tells thee wheresoe’er it turn.
Fix’d in the slime they say: ‘Sad once were we
In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,
Carrying a foul and lazy mist within:
Now in these murky settlings are we sad.’
Such dolorous strain they gurgle in their throats.
But word distinct can utter none.” Our route
Thus compass’d we, a segment widely stretch’d
Between the dry embankment, and the core
Of the loath’d pool, turning meanwhile our eyes
Downward on those who gulp’d its muddy lees;
Nor stopp’d, till to a tower’s low base we came.

CANTO VIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

MY theme pursuing, I relate that ere
We reach'd the lofty turret's base, our eyes
Its height ascended, where two cressets hung
We mark'd, and from afar another light
Return the signal, so remote, that scarce
The eye could catch its beam. I turning round
To the deep source of knowledge, thus inquir'd:
"Say what this means? and what that other light
In answer set? what agency doth this?"

"There on the filthy waters," he replied,
"E'en now what next awaits us mayst thou see,
If the marsh-gender'd fog conceal it not."

Never was arrow from the cord dismiss'd,
That ran its way so nimbly through the air,
As a small bark, that through the waves I spied
Toward us coming, under the sole sway
Of one that ferried it, who cried aloud:
"Art thou arriv'd, fell spirit?"— "Phlegyas, Phlegyas,
This time thou criest in vain," my lord replied;
"No longer shalt thou have us, but while o'er
The slimy pool we pass." As one who hears
Of some great wrong he hath sustain'd, whereat
Inly he pines; so Phlegyas inly pin'd
In his fierce ire. My guide descending stepp'd
Into the skiff, and bade me enter next
Close at his side; nor till my entrance seem'd
The vessel freighted. Soon as both embark'd,
Cutting the waves, goes on the ancient prow,
More deeply than with others it is wont.

Soon as both embark'd,
Cutting the waves, goes on the ancient prow,
More deeply than with others it is wont.
Canto VIII., lines 27—30.

While we our course o'er the dead channel held.
One drench'd in mire before me came, and said;
"Who art thou, that thou comest ere thine hour?"

I answer'd: "Though I come, I tarry not;
But who art thou, that art become so foul?"

"One, as thou seest, who mourn:" he straight replied.

To which I thus: "In mourning and in woe,
Curs'd spirit! tarry thou. I know thee well,
E'en thus in filth disguis'd." Then stretch'd he forth
Hands to the bark; whereof my teacher sage
Aware, thrusting him back: "Away! down there,

My teacher sage
Aware, thrusting him back: "Away! down there
To the other dogs!"
Canto VIII., lines 39—41.

"To the' other dogs!" then, with his arms my neck
Encircling, kiss'd my cheek, and spake: "O soul
Justly disdainful! blest was she in whom
Thou was conceiv'd! He in the world was one
For arrogance noted; to his memory
No virtue lends its lustre; even so
Here is his shadow furious. There above
How many now hold themselves mighty kings
Who here like swine shall wallow in the mire,
Leaving behind them horrible dispraise!"

I then: "Master! him fain would I behold
Whelm'd in these dregs, before we quit the lake."

He thus: “Or ever to thy view the shore
Be offer’d, satisfied shall be that wish,
Which well deserves completion.” Scarce his words
Were ended, when I saw the miry tribes
Set on him with such violence, that yet
For that render I thanks to God and praise
“To Filippo Argenti:” cried they all:
And on himself the moody Florentine
Turn’d his avenging fangs. Him here we left,
Nor speak I of him more. But on mine ear
Sudden a sound of lamentation smote,
Whereat mine eye unbarr’d I sent abroad.

And thus the good instructor: “Now, my son!
Draws near the city, that of Dis is nam’d,
With its grave denizens, a mighty throng.”

I thus: “The minarets already, Sir!
There certes in the valley I descry,
Gleaming vermilion, as if they from fire
Had issu’d.” He replied: “Eternal fire,
That inward burns, shows them with ruddy flame
Illum’d; as in this nether hell thou seest.”

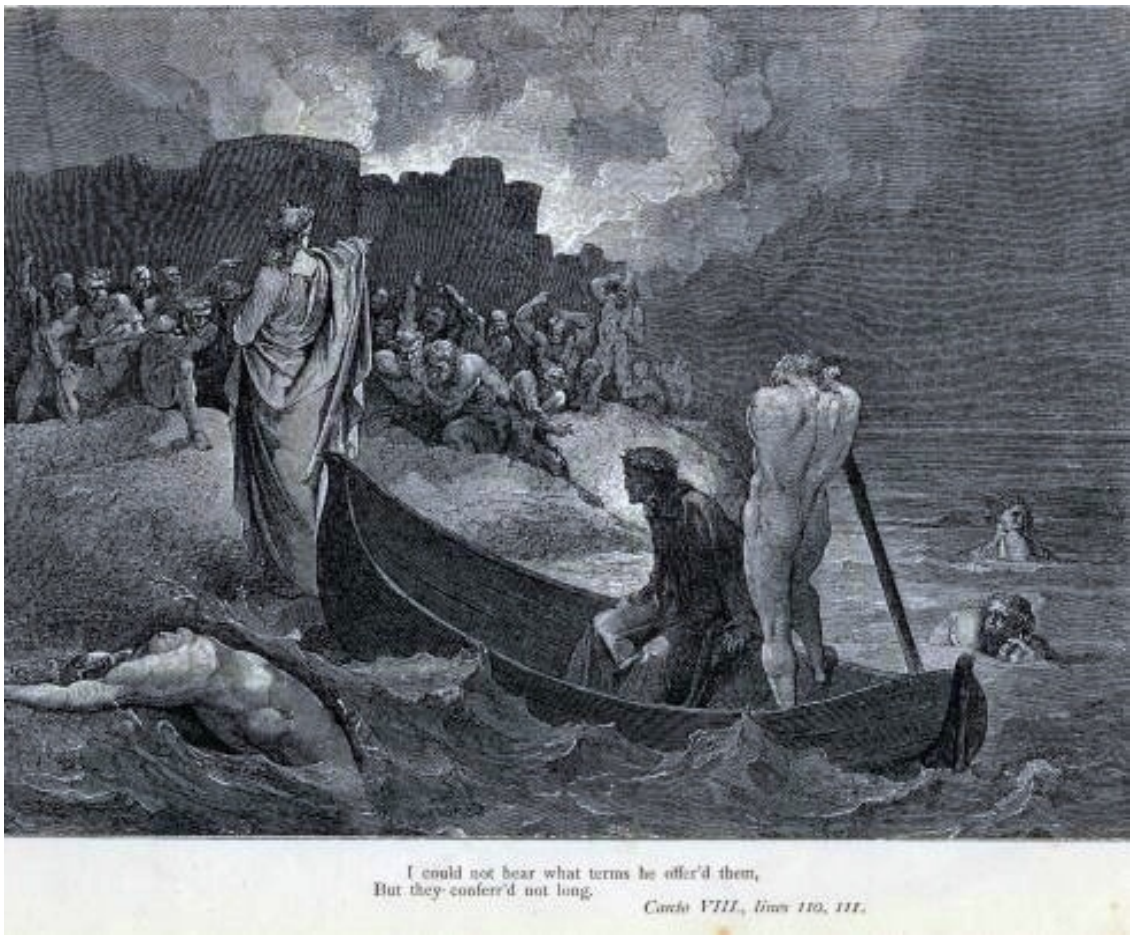
We came within the fosses deep, that moat
This region comfortless. The walls appear’d
As they were fram’d of iron. We had made
Wide circuit, ere a place we reach’d, where loud
The mariner cried vehement: “Go forth!
The’ entrance is here!” Upon the gates I spied
More than a thousand, who of old from heaven
Were hurl’d. With ireful gestures, “Who is this,”
They cried, “that without death first felt, goes through
The regions of the dead?” My sapient guide
Made sign that he for secret parley wish’d;
Whereat their angry scorn abating, thus
They spake: “Come thou alone; and let him go
Who hath so hardily enter’d this realm.
Alone return he by his witless way;

If well he know it, let him prove. For thee,
Here shalt thou tarry, who through clime so dark
Hast been his escort." Now bethink thee, reader!
What cheer was mine at sound of those curs'd words.
I did believe I never should return.

"O my lov'd guide! who more than seven times
Security hast render'd me, and drawn
From peril deep, whereto I stood expos'd,
Desert me not," I cried, "in this extreme.
And if our onward going be denied,
Together trace we back our steps with speed."

My liege, who thither had conducted me,
Replied: "Fear not: for of our passage none
Hath power to disappoint us, by such high
Authority permitted. But do thou
Expect me here; meanwhile thy wearied spirit
Comfort, and feed with kindly hope, assur'd
I will not leave thee in this lower world."

This said, departs the sire benevolent,
And quits me. Hesitating I remain
At war 'twixt will and will not in my thoughts.



I could not hear what terms he offer’d them,
But they conferr’d not long, for all at once
To trial fled within. Clos’d were the gates
By those our adversaries on the breast
Of my liege lord: excluded he return’d
To me with tardy steps. Upon the ground
His eyes were bent, and from his brow eras’d
All confidence, while thus with sighs he spake:
“Who hath denied me these abodes of woe?”
Then thus to me: “That I am anger’d, think
No ground of terror: in this trial I
Shall vanquish, use what arts they may within
For hindrance. This their insolence, not new,
Erewhile at gate less secret they display’d,
Which still is without bolt; upon its arch
Thou saw’st the deadly scroll: and even now
On this side of its entrance, down the steep,

Passing the circles, unescorted, comes
One whose strong might can open us this land.”

CANTO IX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

THE hue, which coward dread on my pale cheeks
Imprinted, when I saw my guide turn back,
Chas'd that from his which newly they had worn,
And inwardly restrain'd it. He, as one
Who listens, stood attentive: for his eye
Not far could lead him through the sable air,
And the thick-gath'ring cloud. "It yet behooves
We win this fight" — thus he began— "if not —
Such aid to us is offer'd. — Oh, how long
Me seems it, ere the promis'd help arrive!"

I noted, how the sequel of his words
Clok'd their beginning; for the last he spake
Agreed not with the first. But not the less
My fear was at his saying; sith I drew
To import worse perchance, than that he held,
His mutilated speech. "Doth ever any
Into this rueful concave's extreme depth
Descend, out of the first degree, whose pain
Is deprivation merely of sweet hope?"

Thus I inquiring. "Rarely," he replied,
"It chances, that among us any makes
This journey, which I wend. Erewhile 'tis true
Once came I here beneath, conjur'd by fell
Erictho, sorceress, who compell'd the shades
Back to their bodies. No long space my flesh
Was naked of me, when within these walls
She made me enter, to draw forth a spirit
From out of Judas' circle. Lowest place
Is that of all, obscurest, and remov'd
Farthest from heav'n's all-circling orb. The road
Full well I know: thou therefore rest secure.
That lake, the noisome stench exhaling, round
The city' of grief encompasses, which now

We may not enter without rage." Yet more
He added: but I hold it not in mind,
For that mine eye toward the lofty tower
Had drawn me wholly, to its burning top.
Where in an instant I beheld uprisen
At once three hellish furies stain'd with blood:
In limb and motion feminine they seem'd;
Around them greenest hydras twisting roll'd
Their volumes; adders and cerastes crept
Instead of hair, and their fierce temples bound.

He knowing well the miserable hags
Who tend the queen of endless woe, thus spake:

Mark thou each dire Erynnis.
Canto IX., line 46.

“Mark thou each dire Erinnys. To the left
This is Megaera; on the right hand she,
Who wails, Alecto; and Tisiphone
I’ th’ midst.” This said, in silence he remain’d
Their breast they each one clawing tore; themselves
Smote with their palms, and such shrill clamour rais’d,
That to the bard I clung, suspicion-bound.
“Hasten Medusa: so to adamant
Him shall we change;” all looking down exclaim’d.
“E’en when by Theseus’ might assail’d, we took
No ill revenge.” ”Turn thyself round, and keep
Thy count’nance hid; for if the Gorgon dire
Be shown, and thou shouldst view it, thy return
Upwards would be for ever lost.” This said,
Himself my gentle master turn’d me round,
Nor trusted he my hands, but with his own
He also hid me. Ye of intellect
Sound and entire, mark well the lore conceal’d
Under close texture of the mystic strain!

And now there came o’er the perturbed waves
Loud-crashing, terrible, a sound that made
Either shore tremble, as if of a wind
Impetuous, from conflicting vapours sprung,
That ‘gainst some forest driving all its might,
Plucks off the branches, beats them down and hurls
Afar; then onward passing proudly sweeps
Its whirlwind rage, while beasts and shepherds fly.

Mine eyes he loos’d, and spake: “And now direct
Thy visual nerve along that ancient foam,
There, thickest where the smoke ascends.” As frogs
Before their foe the serpent, through the wave
Ply swiftly all, till at the ground each one
Lies on a heap; more than a thousand spirits
Destroy’d, so saw I fleeing before one
Who pass’d with unwet feet the Stygian sound.
He, from his face removing the gross air,
Oft his left hand forth stretch’d, and seem’d alone

By that annoyance wearied. I perceiv'd
That he was sent from heav'n, and to my guide
Turn'd me, who signal made that I should stand
Quiet, and bend to him. Ah me! how full
Of noble anger seem'd he! To the gate
He came, and with his wand touch'd it, whereat
Open without impediment it flew.

"Outcasts of heav'n! O abject race and scorn'd!"
Began he on the horrid grunsel standing,
"Whence doth this wild excess of insolence
Lodge in you? wherefore kick you 'gainst that will
Ne'er frustrate of its end, and which so oft
Hath laid on you enforcement of your pangs?
What profits at the fays to but the horn?
Your Cerberus, if ye remember, hence
Bears still, peel'd of their hair, his throat and maw."

This said, he turn'd back o'er the filthy way,
And syllable to us spake none, but wore
The semblance of a man by other care
Beset, and keenly press'd, than thought of him
Who in his presence stands. Then we our steps
Toward that territory mov'd, secure
After the hallow'd words. We unoppos'd
There enter'd; and my mind eager to learn
What state a fortress like to that might hold,
I soon as enter'd throw mine eye around,
And see on every part wide-stretching space
Replete with bitter pain and torment ill.

As where Rhone stagnates on the plains of Arles,
Or as at Pola, near Quarnaro's gulf,
That closes Italy and laves her bounds,
The place is all thick spread with sepulchres;
So was it here, save what in horror here
Excell'd: for 'midst the graves were scattered flames,
Wherewith intensely all throughout they burn'd,
That iron for no craft there hotter needs.

Their lids all hung suspended, and beneath
From them forth issu'd lamentable moans,
Such as the sad and tortur'd well might raise.

I thus: "Master! say who are these, interr'd
Within these vaults, of whom distinct we hear
The dolorous sighs?" He answer thus return'd:

He answer thus return'd:
"The arch-heretics are here, accompanied
By every sect their followers."
Canto IX., lines 124—126.

"The arch-heretics are here, accompanied
By every sect their followers; and much more,
Than thou believest, tombs are freighted: like
With like is buried; and the monuments
Are different in degrees of heat." This said,
He to the right hand turning, on we pass'd
Betwixt the afflicted and the ramparts high.

CANTO X

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

NOW by a secret pathway we proceed,
Between the walls, that hem the region round,
And the tormented souls: my master first,
I close behind his steps. "Virtue supreme!"
I thus began; "who through these ample orbs
In circuit lead'st me, even as thou will'st,
Speak thou, and satisfy my wish. May those,
Who lie within these sepulchres, be seen?
Already all the lids are rais'd, and none
O'er them keeps watch." He thus in answer spake
"They shall be closed all, what-time they here
From Josaphat return'd shall come, and bring
Their bodies, which above they now have left.
The cemetery on this part obtain
With Epicurus all his followers,
Who with the body make the spirit die.
Here therefore satisfaction shall be soon
Both to the question ask'd, and to the wish,
Which thou conceal'st in silence." I replied:
"I keep not, guide belov'd! from thee my heart
Secreted, but to shun vain length of words,
A lesson erewhile taught me by thyself."

"O Tuscan! thou who through the city of fire
Alive art passing, so discreet of speech!
Here please thee stay awhile. Thy utterance
Declares the place of thy nativity
To be that noble land, with which perchance
I too severely dealt." Sudden that sound
Forth issu'd from a vault, whereat in fear
I somewhat closer to my leader's side
Approaching, he thus spake: "What dost thou? Turn.
Lo, Farinata, there! who hath himself
Uplifted: from his girdle upwards all

Expos'd behold him." On his face was mine
Already fix'd; his breast and forehead there
Erecting, seem'd as in high scorn he held
E'en hell. Between the sepulchres to him
My guide thrust me with fearless hands and prompt,
This warning added: "See thy words be clear!"

He, soon as there I stood at the tomb's foot,
Eyed me a space; then in disdainful mood
Address'd me: "Say what ancestors were thine."
Canto X., lines 40—42.

He, soon as there I stood at the tomb's foot,
Ey'd me a space, then in disdainful mood
Address'd me: "Say, what ancestors were thine?"

I, willing to obey him, straight reveal'd
The whole, nor kept back aught: whence he, his brow
Somewhat uplifting, cried: "Fiercely were they
Adverse to me, my party, and the blood

From whence I sprang: twice therefore I abroad
Scatter'd them." "Though driv'n out, yet they each time
From all parts," answer'd I, "return'd; an art
Which yours have shown, they are not skill'd to learn."

Then, peering forth from the unclosed jaw,
Rose from his side a shade, high as the chin,
Leaning, methought, upon its knees uprais'd.
It look'd around, as eager to explore
If there were other with me; but perceiving
That fond imagination quench'd, with tears
Thus spake: "If thou through this blind prison go'st.
Led by thy lofty genius and profound,
Where is my son? and wherefore not with thee?"

I straight replied: "Not of myself I come,
By him, who there expects me, through this clime
Conducted, whom perchance Guido thy son
Had in contempt." Already had his words
And mode of punishment read me his name,
Whence I so fully answer'd. He at once
Exclaim'd, up starting, "How! said'st thou he HAD?
No longer lives he? Strikes not on his eye
The blessed daylight?" Then of some delay
I made ere my reply aware, down fell
Supine, not after forth appear'd he more.

Meanwhile the other, great of soul, near whom
I yet was station'd, chang'd not count'nance stern,
Nor mov'd the neck, nor bent his ribbed side.
"And if," continuing the first discourse,
"They in this art," he cried, "small skill have shown,
That doth torment me more e'en than this bed.
But not yet fifty times shall be relum'd
Her aspect, who reigns here Queen of this realm,
Ere thou shalt know the full weight of that art.
So to the pleasant world mayst thou return,
As thou shalt tell me, why in all their laws,
Against my kin this people is so fell?"

“The slaughter and great havoc,” I replied,
“That colour’d Arbia’s flood with crimson stain —
To these impute, that in our hallow’d dome
Such orisons ascend.” Sighing he shook
The head, then thus resum’d: “In that affray
I stood not singly, nor without just cause
Assuredly should with the rest have stirr’d;
But singly there I stood, when by consent
Of all, Florence had to the ground been raz’d,
The one who openly forbad the deed.”

“So may thy lineage find at last repose,”
I thus adjur’d him, “as thou solve this knot,
Which now involves my mind. If right I hear,
Ye seem to view beforehand, that which time
Leads with him, of the present uninform’d.”

“We view, as one who hath an evil sight,”
He answer’d, “plainly, objects far remote:
So much of his large spendour yet imparts
The’ Almighty Ruler; but when they approach
Or actually exist, our intellect
Then wholly fails, nor of your human state
Except what others bring us know we aught.
Hence therefore mayst thou understand, that all
Our knowledge in that instant shall expire,
When on futurity the portals close.”

Then conscious of my fault, and by remorse
Smitten, I added thus: “Now shalt thou say
To him there fallen, that his offspring still
Is to the living join’d; and bid him know,
That if from answer silent I abstain’d,
’Twas that my thought was occupied intent
Upon that error, which thy help hath solv’d.”

But now my master summoning me back
I heard, and with more eager haste besought

The spirit to inform me, who with him
Partook his lot. He answer thus return'd:

"More than a thousand with me here are laid
Within is Frederick, second of that name,
And the Lord Cardinal, and of the rest
I speak not." He, this said, from sight withdrew.
But I my steps towards the ancient bard
Reverting, ruminated on the words
Betokening me such ill. Onward he mov'd,
And thus in going question'd: "Whence the' amaze
That holds thy senses wrapt?" I satisfied
The' inquiry, and the sage enjoin'd me straight:
"Let thy safe memory store what thou hast heard
To thee importing harm; and note thou this,"
With his rais'd finger bidding me take heed,

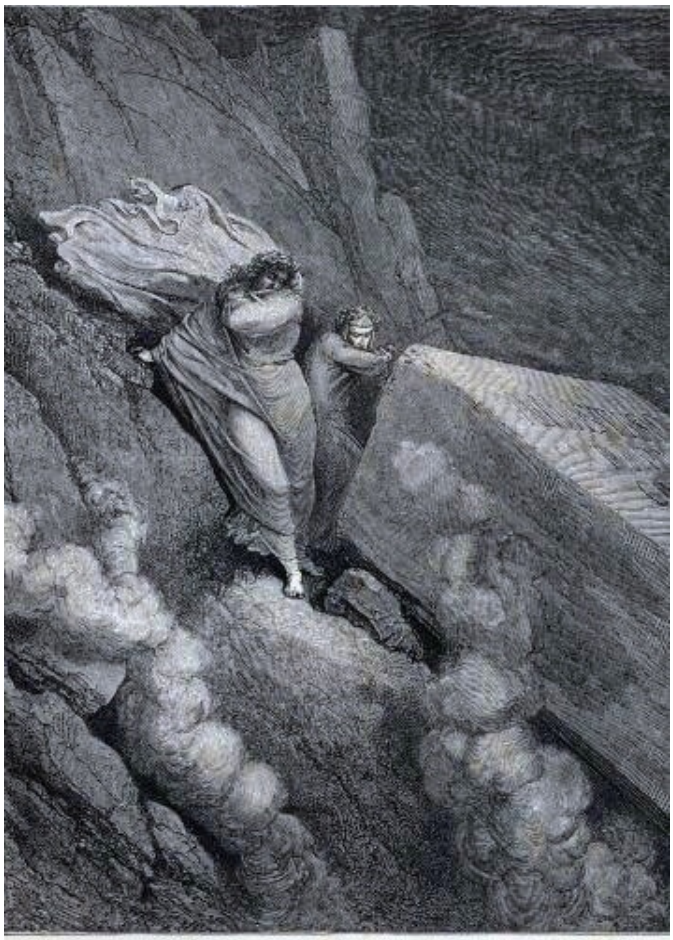
"When thou shalt stand before her gracious beam,
Whose bright eye all surveys, she of thy life
The future tenour will to thee unfold."

Forthwith he to the left hand turn'd his feet:
We left the wall, and tow'rds the middle space
Went by a path, that to a valley strikes;
Which e'en thus high exhal'd its noisome steam.

CANTO XI

Table of Contents for ‘The Divine Comedy’

UPON the utmost verge of a high bank,
By craggy rocks environ’d round, we came,
Where woes beneath more cruel yet were stow’d:
And here to shun the horrible excess
Of fetid exhalation, upward cast
From the profound abyss, behind the lid
Of a great monument we stood retir’d,



From the profound abyss, behind the lid
Of a great monument we stood retired.
Canto XI., lines 6, 7.

Whereon this scroll I mark’d: “I have in charge
Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus drew
From the right path. — Ere our descent behooves

We make delay, that somewhat first the sense,
To the dire breath accustom'd, afterward
Regard it not." My master thus; to whom
Answering I spake: "Some compensation find
That the time past not wholly lost." He then:
"Lo! how my thoughts e'en to thy wishes tend!
My son! within these rocks," he thus began,
"Are three close circles in gradation plac'd,
As these which now thou leav'st. Each one is full
Of spirits accurs'd; but that the sight alone
Hereafter may suffice thee, listen how
And for what cause in durance they abide.

"Of all malicious act abhorr'd in heaven,
The end is injury; and all such end
Either by force or fraud works other's woe
But fraud, because of man peculiar evil,
To God is more displeasing; and beneath
The fraudulent are therefore doom'd to' endure
Severer pang. The violent occupy
All the first circle; and because to force
Three persons are obnoxious, in three rounds
Hach within other sep'rate is it fram'd.
To God, his neighbour, and himself, by man
Force may be offer'd; to himself I say
And his possessions, as thou soon shalt hear
At full. Death, violent death, and painful wounds
Upon his neighbour he inflicts; and wastes
By devastation, pillage, and the flames,
His substance. Slayers, and each one that smites
In malice, plund'rers, and all robbers, hence
The torment undergo of the first round
In different herds. Man can do violence
To himself and his own blessings: and for this
He in the second round must aye deplore
With unavailing penitence his crime,
Whoe'er deprives himself of life and light,
In reckless lavishment his talent wastes,
And sorrows there where he should dwell in joy.

To God may force be offer'd, in the heart
Denying and blaspheming his high power,
And nature with her kindly law contemning.
And thence the inmost round marks with its seal
Sodom and Cahors, and all such as speak
Contemptuously' of the Godhead in their hearts.

"Fraud, that in every conscience leaves a sting,
May be by man employ'd on one, whose trust
He wins, or on another who withholds
Strict confidence. Seems as the latter way
Broke but the bond of love which Nature makes.
Whence in the second circle have their nest
Dissimulation, witchcraft, flatteries,
Theft, falsehood, simony, all who seduce
To lust, or set their honesty at pawn,
With such vile scum as these. The other way
Forgets both Nature's general love, and that
Which thereto added afterwards gives birth
To special faith. Whence in the lesser circle,
Point of the universe, dread seat of Dis,
The traitor is eternally consum'd."

I thus: "Instructor, clearly thy discourse
Proceeds, distinguishing the hideous chasm
And its inhabitants with skill exact.
But tell me this: they of the dull, fat pool,
Whom the rain beats, or whom the tempest drives,
Or who with tongues so fierce conflicting meet,
Wherefore within the city fire-illum'd
Are not these punish'd, if God's wrath be on them?
And if it be not, wherefore in such guise
Are they condemned?" He answer thus return'd:
"Wherefore in dotage wanders thus thy mind,
Not so accustom'd? or what other thoughts
Possess it? Dwell not in thy memory
The words, wherein thy ethic page describes
Three dispositions adverse to Heav'n's will,
Incont'nence, malice, and mad brutishness,

And how incontinence the least offends
God, and least guilt incurs? If well thou note
This judgment, and remember who they are,
Without these walls to vain repentance doom'd,
Thou shalt discern why they apart are plac'd
From these fell spirits, and less wreakful pours
Justice divine on them its vengeance down."

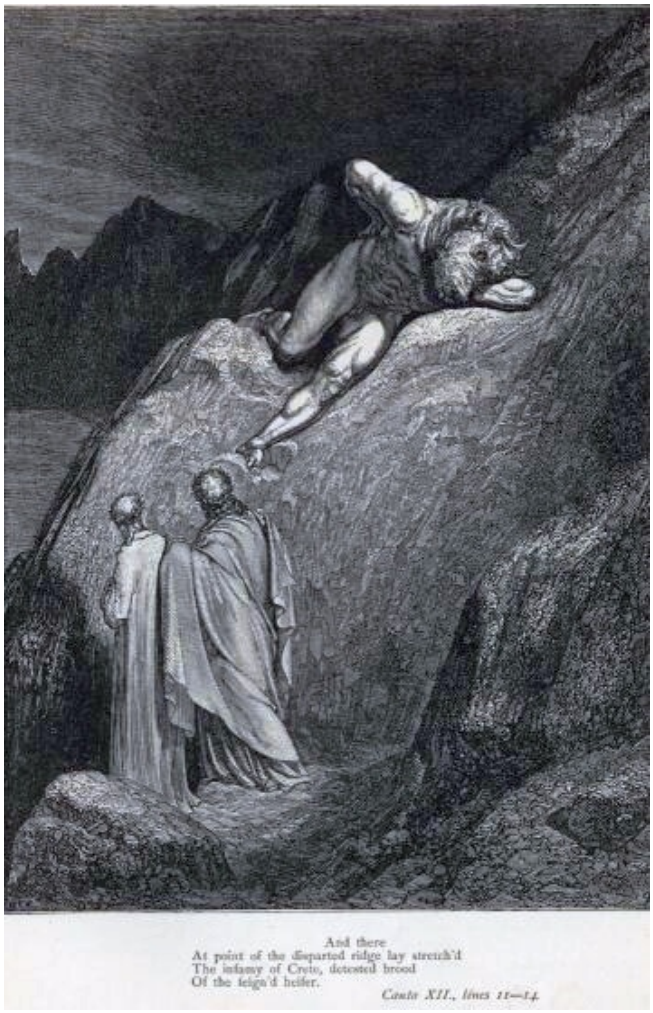
"O Sun! who healest all imperfect sight,
Thou so content'st me, when thou solv'st my doubt,
That ignorance not less than knowledge charms.
Yet somewhat turn thee back," I in these words
Continu'd, "where thou saidst, that usury
Offends celestial Goodness; and this knot
Perplex'd unravel." He thus made reply:
"Philosophy, to an attentive ear,
Clearly points out, not in one part alone,
How imitative nature takes her course
From the celestial mind and from its art:
And where her laws the Stagyrite unfolds,
Not many leaves scann'd o'er, observing well
Thou shalt discover, that your art on her
Obsequious follows, as the learner treads
In his instructor's step, so that your art
Deserves the name of second in descent
From God. These two, if thou recall to mind
Creation's holy book, from the beginning
Were the right source of life and excellence
To human kind. But in another path
The usurer walks; and Nature in herself
And in her follower thus he sets at nought,
Placing elsewhere his hope. But follow now
My steps on forward journey bent; for now
The Pisces play with undulating glance
Along the' horizon, and the Wain lies all
O'er the north-west; and onward there a space
Is our steep passage down the rocky height."

CANTO XII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

THE place where to descend the precipice
We came, was rough as Alp, and on its verge
Such object lay, as every eye would shun.

As is that ruin, which Adice's stream
On this side Trento struck, should'ring the wave,
Or loos'd by earthquake or for lack of prop;
For from the mountain's summit, whence it mov'd
To the low level, so the headlong rock
Is shiver'd, that some passage it might give
To him who from above would pass; e'en such
Into the chasm was that descent: and there
At point of the disparted ridge lay stretch'd
The infamy of Crete, detested brood
Of the feign'd heifer: and at sight of us
It gnaw'd itself, as one with rage distract.



And there
At point of the disparted ridge lay stretch'd
The infamy of Crete, detested brood
Of the feign'd heifer.

Canto XII., lines 11—14.

To him my guide exclaim'd: "Perchance thou deem'st
The King of Athens here, who, in the world
Above, thy death contriv'd. Monster! avaunt!
He comes not tutor'd by thy sister's art,
But to behold your torments is he come."

Like to a bull, that with impetuous spring
Darts, at the moment when the fatal blow
Hath struck him, but unable to proceed
Plunges on either side; so saw I plunge
The Minotaur; whereat the sage exclaim'd:
"Run to the passage! while he storms, 't is well
That thou descend." Thus down our road we took
Through those dilapidated crags, that oft

Mov’d underneath my feet, to weight like theirs
Unus’d. I pond’ring went, and thus he spake:

“Perhaps thy thoughts are of this ruin’d steep,
Guarded by the brute violence, which I
Have vanquish’d now. Know then, that when I erst
Hither descended to the nether hell,
This rock was not yet fallen. But past doubt
(If well I mark) not long ere He arrived,
Who carried off from Dis the mighty spoil
Of the highest circle, then through all its bounds
Such trembling seiz’d the deep concave and foul,
I thought the universe was thrill’d with love,
Whereby, there are who deem, the world hath oft
Been into chaos turn’d: and in that point,
Here, and elsewhere, that old rock toppled down.
But fix thine eyes beneath: the river of blood
Approaches, in the which all those are steep’d,
Who have by violence injur’d.” O blind lust!
O foolish wrath! who so dost goad us on
In the brief life, and in the eternal then
Thus miserably o’erwhelm us. I beheld
An ample foss, that in a bow was bent,
As circling all the plain; for so my guide
Had told. Between it and the rampart’s base
On trail ran Centaurs, with keen arrows arm’d,
As to the chase they on the earth were wont.

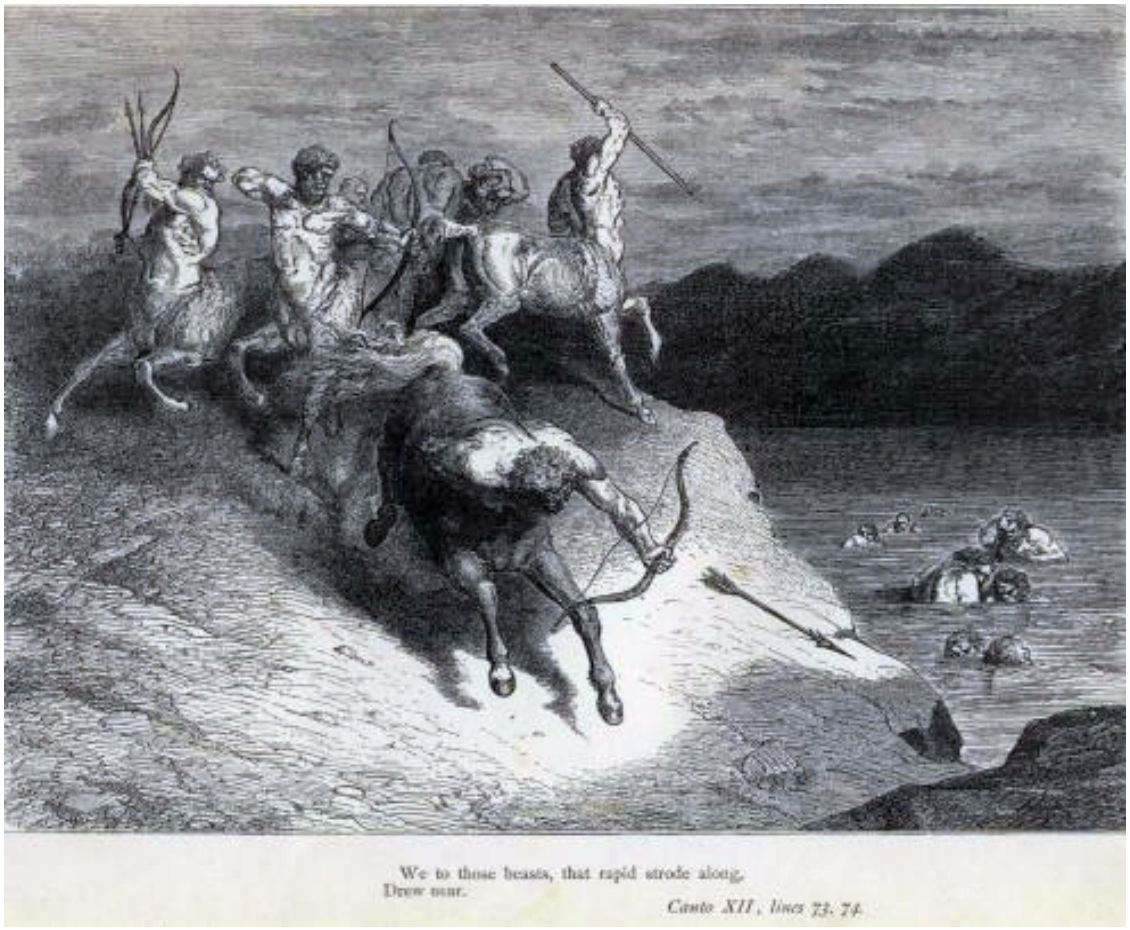
One cried from far: "Say, to what pain ye come
Condemn'd, who down this steep have journey'd."
Canto XII., lines 58, 59.

At seeing us descend they each one stood;
And issuing from the troop, three sped with bows
And missile weapons chosen first; of whom
One cried from far: "Say to what pain ye come
Condemn'd, who down this steep have journied? Speak
From whence ye stand, or else the bow I draw."

To whom my guide: "Our answer shall be made
To Chiron, there, when nearer him we come.
Ill was thy mind, thus ever quick and rash."

Then me he touch'd, and spake: "Nessus is this,
Who for the fair Deianira died,
And wrought himself revenge for his own fate.
He in the midst, that on his breast looks down,
Is the great Chiron who Achilles nurs'd;
That other Pholus, prone to wrath." Around

The foss these go by thousands, aiming shafts
At whatsoever spirit dares emerge
From out the blood, more than his guilt allows.



We to those beasts, that rapid strode along,
Drew near.

Canto XII, lines 73, 74.

We to those beasts, that rapid strode along,
Drew near, when Chiron took an arrow forth,
And with the notch push'd back his shaggy beard
To the cheek-bone, then his great mouth to view
Exposing, to his fellows thus exclaim'd:
"Are ye aware, that he who comes behind
Moves what he touches? The feet of the dead
Are not so wont." My trusty guide, who now
Stood near his breast, where the two natures join,
Thus made reply: "He is indeed alive,
And solitary so must needs by me
Be shown the gloomy vale, thereto induc'd
By strict necessity, not by delight.

She left her joyful harpings in the sky,
Who this new office to my care consign'd.
He is no robber, no dark spirit I.
But by that virtue, which empowers my step
To treat so wild a path, grant us, I pray,
One of thy band, whom we may trust secure,
Who to the ford may lead us, and convey
Across, him mounted on his back; for he
Is not a spirit that may walk the air."

Then on his right breast turning, Chiron thus
To Nessus spake: "Return, and be their guide.
And if ye chance to cross another troop,
Command them keep aloof." Onward we mov'd,
The faithful escort by our side, along
The border of the crimson-seething flood,
Whence from those steep'd within loud shrieks arose.

Some there I mark'd, as high as to their brow
Immers'd, of whom the mighty Centaur thus:
"These are the souls of tyrants, who were given
To blood and rapine. Here they wail aloud
Their merciless wrongs. Here Alexander dwells,
And Dionysius fell, who many a year
Of woe wrought for fair Sicily. That brow
Whereon the hair so jetty clust'ring hangs,
Is Azzolino; that with flaxen locks
Obizzo' of Este, in the world destroy'd
By his foul step-son." To the bard rever'd
I turned me round, and thus he spake; "Let him
Be to thee now first leader, me but next
To him in rank." Then farther on a space
The Centaur paus'd, near some, who at the throat
Were extant from the wave; and showing us
A spirit by itself apart retir'd,
Exclaim'd: "He in God's bosom smote the heart,
Which yet is honour'd on the bank of Thames."

A race I next espied, who held the head,
And even all the bust above the stream

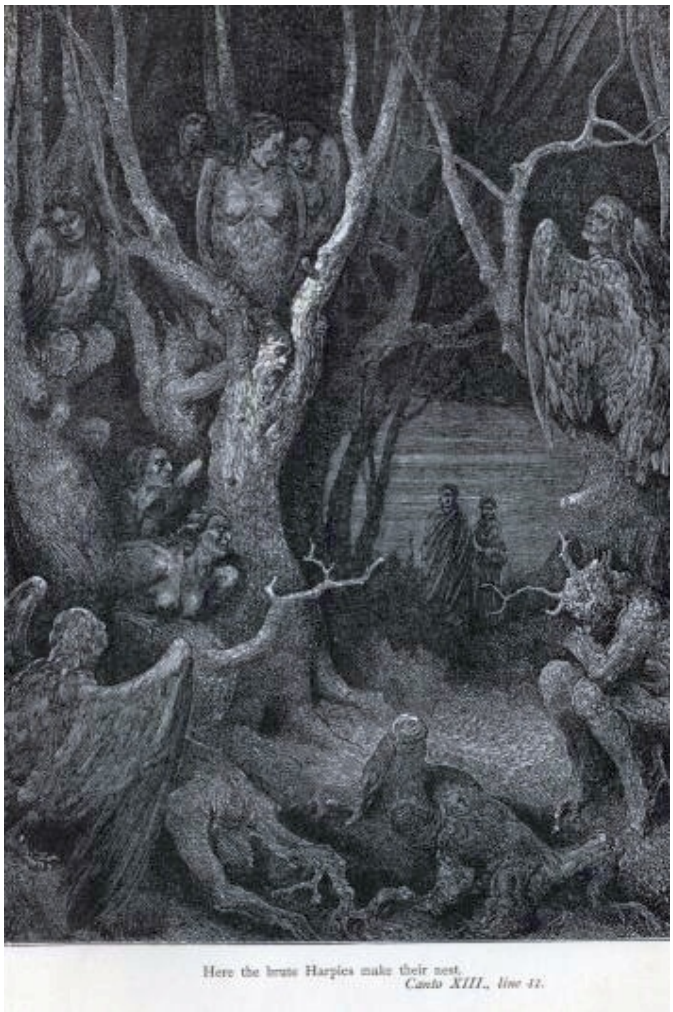
And even all the bust above the stream.
‘Midst these I many a face remember’d well.
Thus shallow more and more the blood became,
So that at last it but imbru’d the feet;
And there our passage lay athwart the foss.

“As ever on this side the boiling wave
Thou seest diminishing,” the Centaur said,
“So on the other, be thou well assur’d,
It lower still and lower sinks its bed,
Till in that part it reuniting join,
Where ‘t is the lot of tyranny to mourn.
There Heav’n’s stern justice lays chastising hand
On Attila, who was the scourge of earth,
On Sextus, and on Pyrrhus, and extracts
Tears ever by the seething flood unlock’d
From the Rinieri, of Corneto this,
Pazzo the other nam’d, who fill’d the ways
With violence and war.” This said, he turn’d,
And quitting us, alone repass’d the ford.

CANTO XIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

ERE Nessus yet had reach'd the other bank,
We enter'd on a forest, where no track
Of steps had worn a way. Not verdant there
The foliage, but of dusky hue; not light
The boughs and tapering, but with knares deform'd
And matted thick: fruits there were none, but thorns
Instead, with venom fill'd. Less sharp than these,
Less intricate the brakes, wherein abide
Those animals, that hate the cultur'd fields,
Betwixt Corneto and Cecina's stream.



Here the brute Harpies make their nest.
Canto XIII., line 12.

Here the brute Harpies make their nest, the same
Who from the Strophades the Trojan band
Drove with dire boding of their future woe.
Broad are their pennons, of the human form
Their neck and count'nance, arm'd with talons keen
The feet, and the huge belly fledge with wings
These sit and wail on the drear mystic wood.

The kind instructor in these words began:
"Ere farther thou proceed, know thou art now
I' th' second round, and shalt be, till thou come
Upon the horrid sand: look therefore well
Around thee, and such things thou shalt behold,
As would my speech discredit." On all sides
I heard sad plainings breathe, and none could see
From whom they might have issu'd. In amaze
Fast bound I stood. He, as it seem'd, believ'd,
That I had thought so many voices came
From some amid those thickets close conceal'd,
And thus his speech resum'd: "If thou lop off
A single twig from one of those ill plants,
The thought thou hast conceiv'd shall vanish quite."

Thereat a little stretching forth my hand,
From a great wilding gather'd I a branch,
And straight the trunk exclaim'd: "Why pluck'st thou me?"

Then as the dark blood trickled down its side,
These words it added: “Wherefore tear’st me thus?
Is there no touch of mercy in thy breast?
Men once were we, that now are rooted here.
Thy hand might well have spar’d us, had we been
The souls of serpents.” As a brand yet green,
That burning at one end from the’ other sends
A groaning sound, and hisses with the wind
That forces out its way, so burst at once,
Forth from the broken splinter words and blood.

I, letting fall the bough, remain’d as one
Assail’d by terror, and the sage replied:
“If he, O injur’d spirit! could have believ’d
What he hath seen but in my verse describ’d,
He never against thee had stretch’d his hand.
But I, because the thing surpass’d belief,

Prompted him to this deed, which even now
Myself I rue. But tell me, who thou wast;
That, for this wrong to do thee some amends,
In the upper world (for thither to return
Is granted him) thy fame he may revive."

"That pleasant word of thine," the trunk replied
"Hath so inveigled me, that I from speech
Cannot refrain, wherein if I indulge
A little longer, in the snare detain'd,
Count it not grievous. I it was, who held
Both keys to Frederick's heart, and turn'd the wards,
Opening and shutting, with a skill so sweet,
That besides me, into his inmost breast
Scarce any other could admittance find.
The faith I bore to my high charge was such,
It cost me the life-blood that warm'd my veins.
The harlot, who ne'er turn'd her gloating eyes
From Caesar's household, common vice and pest
Of courts, 'gainst me inflam'd the minds of all;
And to Augustus they so spread the flame,
That my glad honours chang'd to bitter woes.
My soul, disdainful and disgusted, sought
Refuge in death from scorn, and I became,
Just as I was, unjust toward myself.
By the new roots, which fix this stem, I swear,
That never faith I broke to my liege lord,
Who merited such honour; and of you,
If any to the world indeed return,
Clear he from wrong my memory, that lies
Yet prostrate under envy's cruel blow."

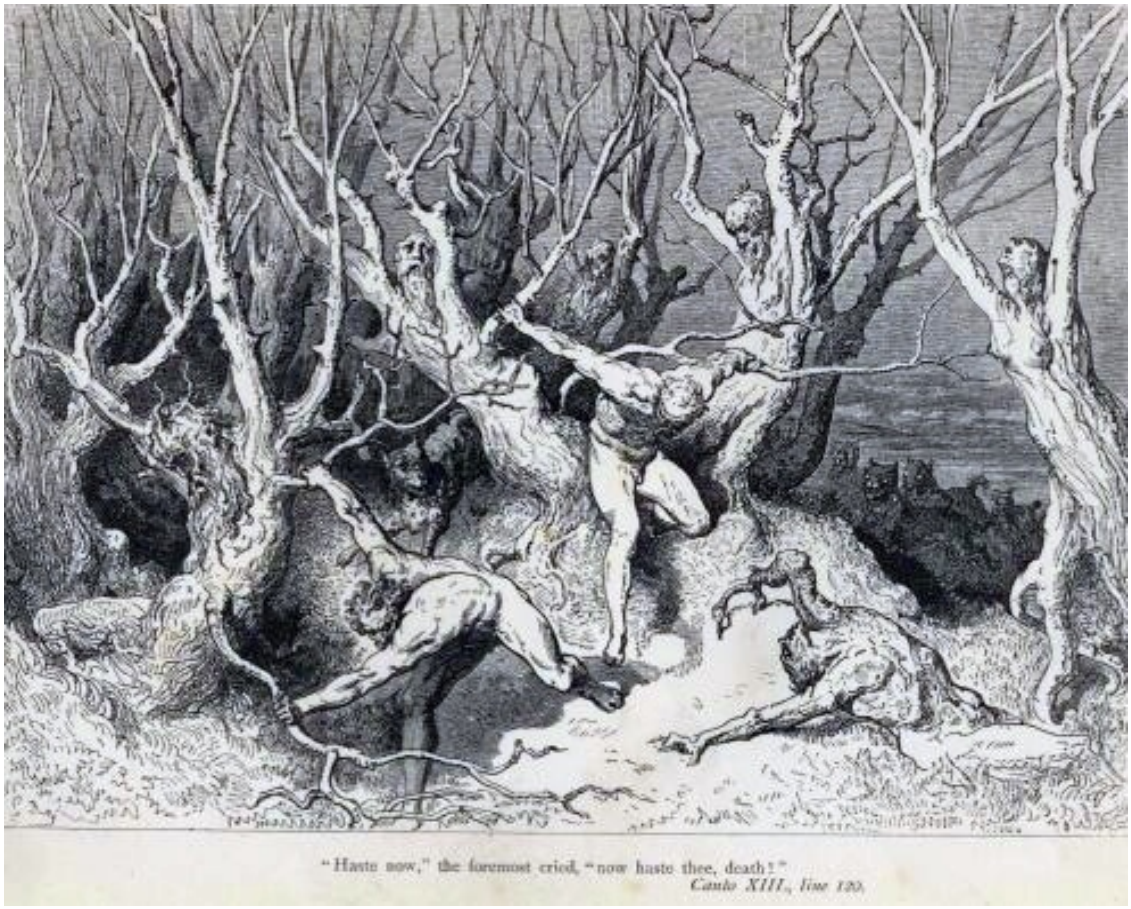
First somewhat pausing, till the mournful words
Were ended, then to me the bard began:
"Lose not the time; but speak and of him ask,
If more thou wish to learn." Whence I replied:
"Question thou him again of whatsoe'er
Will, as thou think'st, content me; for no power
Have I to ask, such pity' is at my heart."

He thus resum'd; "So may he do for thee
Freely what thou entreatest, as thou yet
Be pleas'd, imprison'd Spirit! to declare,
How in these gnarled joints the soul is tied;
And whether any ever from such frame
Be loosen'd, if thou canst, that also tell."

Thereat the trunk breath'd hard, and the wind soon
Chang'd into sounds articulate like these;

Briefly ye shall be answer'd. "When departs
The fierce soul from the body, by itself
Thence torn asunder, to the seventh gulf
By Minos doom'd, into the wood it falls,
No place assign'd, but wheresoever chance
Hurls it, there sprouting, as a grain of spelt,
It rises to a sapling, growing thence
A savage plant. The Harpies, on its leaves
Then feeding, cause both pain and for the pain
A vent to grief. We, as the rest, shall come
For our own spoils, yet not so that with them
We may again be clad; for what a man
Takes from himself it is not just he have.
Here we perforce shall drag them; and throughout
The dismal glade our bodies shall be hung,
Each on the wild thorn of his wretched shade."

Attentive yet to listen to the trunk
We stood, expecting farther speech, when us
A noise surpris'd, as when a man perceives
The wild boar and the hunt approach his place
Of station'd watch, who of the beasts and boughs
Loud rustling round him hears. And lo! there came
Two naked, torn with briers, in headlong flight,
That they before them broke each fan o' th' wood.
"Haste now," the foremost cried, "now haste thee death!"



The' other, as seem'd, impatient of delay
Exclaiming, "Lano! not so bent for speed
Thy sinews, in the lists of Toppo's field."
And then, for that perchance no longer breath
Suffic'd him, of himself and of a bush
One group he made. Behind them was the wood
Full of black female mastiffs, gaunt and fleet,
As greyhounds that have newly slipp'd the leash.
On him, who squatted down, they stuck their fangs,
And having rent him piecemeal bore away
The tortur'd limbs. My guide then seiz'd my hand,
And led me to the thicket, which in vain
Mourn'd through its bleeding wounds: "O Giacomo
Of Sant' Andrea! what avails it thee,"
It cried, "that of me thou hast made thy screen?
For thy ill life what blame on me recoils?"

When o'er it he had paus'd, my master spake:

“Say who wast thou, that at so many points
Breath’st out with blood thy lamentable speech?”

He answer’d: “Oh, ye spirits: arriv’d in time
To spy the shameful havoc, that from me
My leaves hath sever’d thus, gather them up,
And at the foot of their sad parent-tree
Carefully lay them. In that city’ I dwelt,
Who for the Baptist her first patron chang’d,
Whence he for this shall cease not with his art
To work her woe: and if there still remain’d not
On Arno’s passage some faint glimpse of him,
Those citizens, who rear’d once more her walls
Upon the ashes left by Attila,
Had labour’d without profit of their toil.
I slung the fatal noose from my own roof.”

CANTO XIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

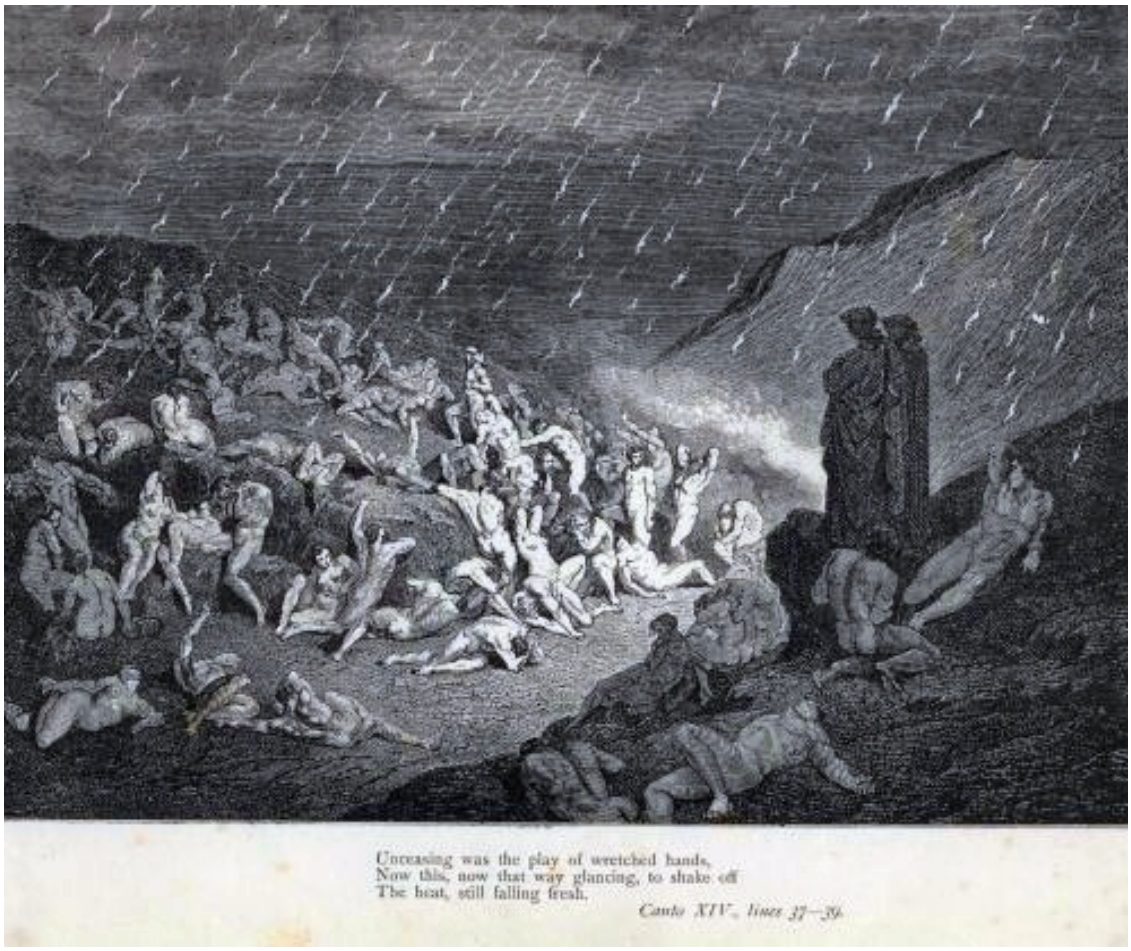
SOON as the charity of native land
Wrought in my bosom, I the scatter'd leaves
Collected, and to him restor'd, who now
Was hoarse with utt'rance. To the limit thence
We came, which from the third the second round
Divides, and where of justice is display'd
Contrivance horrible. Things then first seen
Clearlier to manifest, I tell how next
A plain we reach'd, that from its sterile bed
Each plant repell'd. The mournful wood waves round
Its garland on all sides, as round the wood
Spreads the sad foss. There, on the very edge,
Our steps we stay'd. It was an area wide
Of arid sand and thick, resembling most
The soil that erst by Cato's foot was trod.

Vengeance of Heav'n! Oh! how shouldst thou be fear'd
By all, who read what here my eyes beheld!

Of naked spirits many a flock I saw,
All weeping piteously, to different laws
Subjected: for on the' earth some lay supine,
Some crouching close were seated, others pac'd
Incessantly around; the latter tribe,
More numerous, those fewer who beneath
The torment lay, but louder in their grief.

O'er all the sand fell slowly wafting down
Dilated flakes of fire, as flakes of snow
On Alpine summit, when the wind is hush'd.
As in the torrid Indian clime, the son
Of Ammon saw upon his warrior band
Descending, solid flames, that to the ground
Came down: whence he bethought him with his troop
To trample on the soil; for easier thus

The vapour was extinguish’d, while alone;
So fell the eternal fiery flood, wherewith
The marble glow’d underneath, as under stove
The viands, doubly to augment the pain.



Unceasing was the play of wretched hands,
Now this, now that way glancing, to shake off
The heat, still falling fresh. I thus began:
“Instructor! thou who all things overcom’st,
Except the hardy demons, that rush’d forth
To stop our entrance at the gate, say who
Is yon huge spirit, that, as seems, heeds not
The burning, but lies writhen in proud scorn,
As by the sultry tempest immatur’d?”

Straight he himself, who was aware I ask’d
My guide of him, exclaim’d: “Such as I was

When living, dead such now I am. If Jove
Weary his workman out, from whom in ire
He snatch'd the lightnings, that at my last day
Transfix'd me, if the rest be weary out
At their black smithy labouring by turns
In Mongibello, while he cries aloud;
"Help, help, good Mulciber!" as erst he cried
In the Phlegraean warfare, and the bolts
Launch he full aim'd at me with all his might,
He never should enjoy a sweet revenge."

Then thus my guide, in accent higher rais'd
Than I before had heard him: "Capaneus!
Thou art more punish'd, in that this thy pride
Lives yet unquench'd: no torrent, save thy rage,
Were to thy fury pain proportion'd full."

Next turning round to me with milder lip
He spake: "This of the seven kings was one,
Who girt the Theban walls with siege, and held,
As still he seems to hold, God in disdain,
And sets his high omnipotence at nought.
But, as I told him, his despiteful mood
Is ornament well suits the breast that wears it.
Follow me now; and look thou set not yet
Thy foot in the hot sand, but to the wood
Keep ever close." Silently on we pass'd
To where there gushes from the forest's bound
A little brook, whose crimson'd wave yet lifts
My hair with horror. As the rill, that runs
From Bulicame, to be portion'd out
Among the sinful women; so ran this
Down through the sand, its bottom and each bank
Stone-built, and either margin at its side,
Whereon I straight perceiv'd our passage lay.

"Of all that I have shown thee, since that gate
We enter'd first, whose threshold is to none
Denied, nought else so worthy of regard,
As is this river, has thine eye discern'd

As is this river, has thine eye discern'd,
O'er which the flaming volley all is quench'd."

So spake my guide; and I him thence besought,
That having giv'n me appetite to know,
The food he too would give, that hunger crav'd.

"In midst of ocean," forthwith he began,
"A desolate country lies, which Crete is nam'd,
Under whose monarch in old times the world
Liv'd pure and chaste. A mountain rises there,
Call'd Ida, joyous once with leaves and streams,
Deserted now like a forbidden thing.
It was the spot which Rhea, Saturn's spouse,
Chose for the secret cradle of her son;
And better to conceal him, drown'd in shouts
His infant cries. Within the mount, upright
An ancient form there stands and huge, that turns
His shoulders towards Damiata, and at Rome
As in his mirror looks. Of finest gold
His head is shap'd, pure silver are the breast
And arms; thence to the middle is of brass.
And downward all beneath well-temper'd steel,
Save the right foot of potter's clay, on which
Than on the other more erect he stands,
Each part except the gold, is rent throughout;
And from the fissure tears distil, which join'd
Penetrate to that cave. They in their course
Thus far precipitated down the rock
Form Acheron, and Styx, and Phlegethon;
Then by this straiten'd channel passing hence
Beneath, e'en to the lowest depth of all,
Form there Cocytus, of whose lake (thyself
Shall see it) I here give thee no account."

Then I to him: "If from our world this sluice
Be thus deriv'd; wherefore to us but now
Appears it at this edge?" He straight replied:
"The place, thou know'st, is round; and though great part
Thou have already pass'd, still to the left

Descending to the nethermost, not yet
Hast thou the circuit made of the whole orb.
Wherefore if aught of new to us appear,
It needs not bring up wonder in thy looks."

Then I again inquir'd: "Where flow the streams
Of Phlegethon and Lethe? for of one
Thou tell'st not, and the other of that shower,
Thou say'st, is form'd." He answer thus return'd:
"Doubtless thy questions all well pleas'd I hear.
Yet the red seething wave might have resolv'd
One thou proposest. Lethe thou shalt see,
But not within this hollow, in the place,
Whither to lave themselves the spirits go,
Whose blame hath been by penitence remov'd."
He added: "Time is now we quit the wood.
Look thou my steps pursue: the margins give
Safe passage, unimpeded by the flames;
For over them all vapour is extinct."

CANTO XV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

One of the solid margins bears us now
Envelop'd in the mist, that from the stream
Arising, hovers o'er, and saves from fire
Both piers and water. As the Flemings rear
Their mound, 'twixt Ghent and Bruges, to chase back
The ocean, fearing his tumultuous tide
That drives toward them, or the Paduans theirs
Along the Brenta, to defend their towns
And castles, ere the genial warmth be felt
On Chiarentana's top; such were the mounds,
So fram'd, though not in height or bulk to these
Made equal, by the master, whosoe'er
He was, that rais'd them here. We from the wood
Were not so far remov'd, that turning round
I might not have discern'd it, when we met
A troop of spirits, who came beside the pier.

They each one ey'd us, as at eventide
One eyes another under a new moon,
And toward us sharpen'd their sight as keen,
As an old tailor at his needle's eye.

Thus narrowly explor'd by all the tribe,
I was agniz'd of one, who by the skirt
Caught me, and cried, "What wonder have we here!"

And I, when he to me outstretch'd his arm,
Intently fix'd my ken on his parch'd looks,
That although smirch'd with fire, they hinder'd not
But I remember'd him; and towards his face
My hand inclining, answer'd: "Sir! Brunetto!

"Ser Brunetto!
And are ye here?"
Canto XV., lines 28, 29.

"And art thou here?" He thus to me: "My son!
Oh let it not displease thee, if Brunetto
Latini but a little space with thee
Turn back, and leave his fellows to proceed."

I thus to him replied: "Much as I can,
I thereto pray thee; and if thou be willing,
That I here seat me with thee, I consent;
His leave, with whom I journey, first obtain'd."

"O son!" said he, "whoever of this throng
One instant stops, lies then a hundred years,
No fan to ventilate him, when the fire
Smites sorest. Pass thou therefore on. I close
Will at thy garments walk, and then rejoin
My troop, who go mourning their endless doom."

I dar'd not from the path descend to tread

I dar'd not from the path descend to tread
On equal ground with him, but held my head
Bent down, as one who walks in reverent guise.

"What chance or destiny," thus he began,
"Ere the last day conducts thee here below?
And who is this, that shows to thee the way?"

"There up aloft," I answer'd, "in the life
Serene, I wander'd in a valley lost,
Before mine age had to its fullness reach'd.
But yester-morn I left it: then once more
Into that vale returning, him I met;
And by this path homeward he leads me back."

"If thou," he answer'd, "follow but thy star,
Thou canst not miss at last a glorious haven:
Unless in fairer days my judgment err'd.
And if my fate so early had not chanc'd,
Seeing the heav'ns thus bounteous to thee, I
Had gladly giv'n thee comfort in thy work.
But that ungrateful and malignant race,
Who in old times came down from Fesole,
Ay and still smack of their rough mountain-flint,
Will for thy good deeds shew thee enmity.
Nor wonder; for amongst ill-savour'd crabs
It suits not the sweet fig-tree lay her fruit.
Old fame reports them in the world for blind,
Covetous, envious, proud. Look to it well:
Take heed thou cleanse thee of their ways. For thee
Thy fortune hath such honour in reserve,
That thou by either party shalt be crav'd
With hunger keen: but be the fresh herb far
From the goat's tooth. The herd of Fesole
May of themselves make litter, not touch the plant,
If any such yet spring on their rank bed,
In which the holy seed revives, transmitted
From those true Romans, who still there remain'd,
When it was made the nest of so much ill."

"W[illegible]fulfill'd." I straight replied:

¨Were all my wish fulfill´d,´´ I straight replied,
“Thou from the confines of man’s nature yet
Hadst not been driven forth; for in my mind
Is fix’d, and now strikes full upon my heart
The dear, benign, paternal image, such
As thine was, when so lately thou didst teach me
The way for man to win eternity;
And how I priz’d the lesson, it behooves,
That, long as life endures, my tongue should speak,
What of my fate thou tell’st, that write I down:
And with another text to comment on
For her I keep it, the celestial dame,
Who will know all, if I to her arrive.
This only would I have thee clearly note:
That so my conscience have no plea against me;
Do fortune as she list, I stand prepar’d.
Not new or strange such earnest to mine ear.
Speed fortune then her wheel, as likes her best,
The clown his mattock; all things have their course.”

Thereat my sapient guide upon his right
Turn’d himself back, then look’d at me and spake:
“He listens to good purpose who takes note.”

I not the less still on my way proceed,
Discoursing with Brunetto, and inquire
Who are most known and chief among his tribe.

“To know of some is well;” thus he replied,
“But of the rest silence may best beseem.
Time would not serve us for report so long.
In brief I tell thee, that all these were clerks,
Men of great learning and no less renown,
By one same sin polluted in the world.
With them is Priscian, and Accorso’s son
Francesco herds among that wretched throng:
And, if the wish of so impure a blotch
Possess’d thee, him thou also might’st have seen,
Who by the servants’ servant was transferr’d

From Arno’s seat to Bacchiglione, where
His ill-strain’d nerves he left. I more would add,
But must from farther speech and onward way
Alike desist, for yonder I behold
A mist new-risen on the sandy plain.
A company, with whom I may not sort,
Approaches. I commend my TREASURE to thee,
Wherein I yet survive; my sole request.”

This said he turn’d, and seem’d as one of those,
Who o’er Verona’s champain try their speed
For the green mantle, and of them he seem’d,
Not he who loses but who gains the prize.

CANTO XVI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

NOW came I where the water's din was heard,
As down it fell into the other round,
Resounding like the hum of swarming bees:
When forth together issu'd from a troop,
That pass'd beneath the fierce tormenting storm,
Three spirits, running swift. They towards us came,
And each one cried aloud, "Oh do thou stay!
Whom by the fashion of thy garb we deem
To be some inmate of our evil land."

Ah me! what wounds I mark'd upon their limbs,
Recent and old, inflicted by the flames!
E'en the remembrance of them grieves me yet.

Attentive to their cry my teacher paus'd,
And turn'd to me his visage, and then spake;
"Wait now! our courtesy these merit well:
And were 't not for the nature of the place,
Whence glide the fiery darts, I should have said,
That haste had better suited thee than them."

They, when we stopp'd, resum'd their ancient wail,
And soon as they had reach'd us, all the three
Whirl'd round together in one restless wheel.
As naked champions, smear'd with slippery oil,
Are wont intent to watch their place of hold
And vantage, ere in closer strife they meet;
Thus each one, as he wheel'd, his countenance
At me directed, so that opposite
The neck mov'd ever to the twinkling feet.

"If misery of this drear wilderness,"
Thus one began, "added to our sad cheer
And destitute, do call forth scorn on us
And our entreaties, let our great renown

Incline thee to inform us who thou art,
That dost imprint with living feet unharm'd
The soil of Hell. He, in whose track thou see'st
My steps pursuing, naked though he be
And reft of all, was of more high estate
Than thou believest; grandchild of the chaste
Gualdrada, him they Guidoguerra call'd,
Who in his lifetime many a noble act
Achiev'd, both by his wisdom and his sword.
The other, next to me that beats the sand,
Is Aldobrandi, name deserving well,
In the' upper world, of honour; and myself
Who in this torment do partake with them,
Am Rusticucci, whom, past doubt, my wife
Of savage temper, more than aught beside
Hath to this evil brought." If from the fire
I had been shelter'd, down amidst them straight
I then had cast me, nor my guide, I deem,
Would have restrain'd my going; but that fear
Of the dire burning vanquish'd the desire,
Which made me eager of their wish'd embrace.

I then began: "Not scorn, but grief much more,
Such as long time alone can cure, your doom
Fix'd deep within me, soon as this my lord
Spake words, whose tenour taught me to expect
That such a race, as ye are, was at hand.
I am a countryman of yours, who still
Affectionate have utter'd, and have heard
Your deeds and names renown'd. Leaving the gall
For the sweet fruit I go, that a sure guide
Hath promis'd to me. But behooves, that far
As to the centre first I downward tend."

"So may long space thy spirit guide thy limbs,"
He answer straight return'd; "and so thy fame
Shine bright, when thou art gone; as thou shalt tell,
If courtesy and valour, as they wont,
Dwell in our city, or have vanish'd clean?
For one amidst us late, condemn'd to grail

For one amidst us late condemn'd to wail,
Borsiere, yonder walking with his peers,
Grieves us no little by the news he brings."

"An upstart multitude and sudden gains,
Pride and excess, O Florence! have in thee
Engender'd, so that now in tears thou mourn'st!"
Thus cried I with my face uprais'd, and they
All three, who for an answer took my words,
Look'd at each other, as men look when truth
Comes to their ear. "If thou at other times,"
They all at once rejoin'd, "so easily
Satisfy those, who question, happy thou,
Gifted with words, so apt to speak thy thought!
Wherefore if thou escape this darksome clime,
Returning to behold the radiant stars,
When thou with pleasure shalt retrace the past,
See that of us thou speak among mankind."

This said, they broke the circle, and so swift
Fled, that as pinions seem'd their nimble feet.

Not in so short a time might one have said
"Amen," as they had vanish'd. Straight my guide
Pursu'd his track. I follow'd; and small space
Had we pass'd onward, when the water's sound
Was now so near at hand, that we had scarce
Heard one another's speech for the loud din.

E'en as the river, that holds on its course
Unmingled, from the mount of Vesulo,
On the left side of Apennine, toward
The east, which Acquacheta higher up
They call, ere it descend into the vale,
At Forli by that name no longer known,
Rebellows o'er Saint Benedict, roll'd on
From the' Alpine summit down a precipice,
Where space enough to lodge a thousand spreads;
Thus downward from a craggy steep we found,
That this dark wave resounded, roaring loud,

So that the ear its clamour soon had stunn’d.

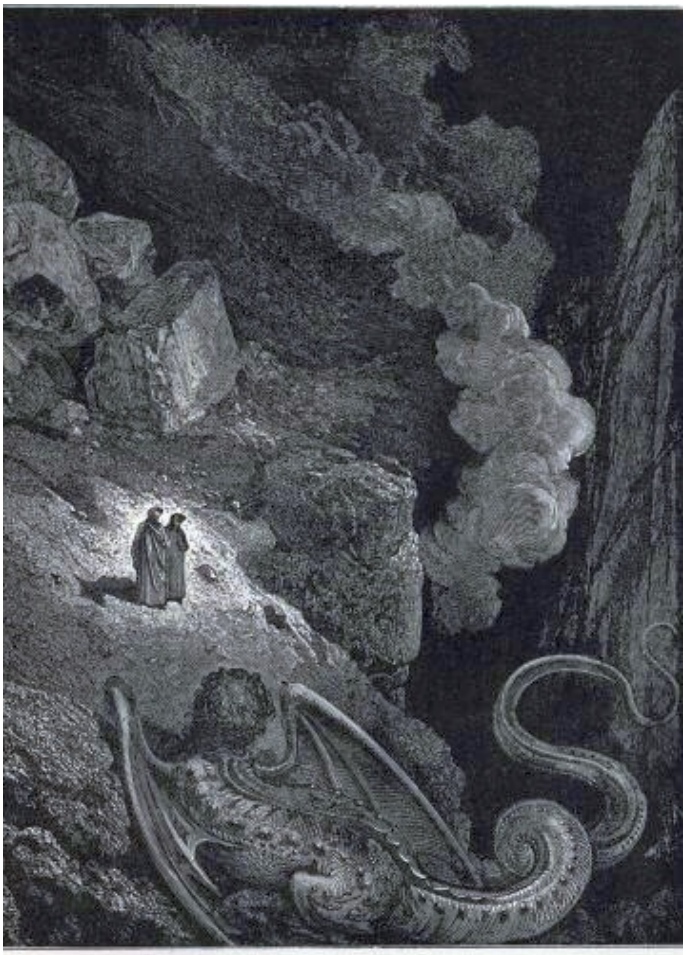
I had a cord that brac’d my girdle round,
Wherewith I erst had thought fast bound to take
The painted leopard. This when I had all
Unloosen’d from me (so my master bade)
I gather’d up, and stretch’d it forth to him.
Then to the right he turn’d, and from the brink
Standing few paces distant, cast it down
Into the deep abyss. ”And somewhat strange,”
Thus to myself I spake, “signal so strange
Betokens, which my guide with earnest eye
Thus follows.” Ah! what caution must men use
With those who look not at the deed alone,
But spy into the thoughts with subtle skill!

“Quickly shall come,” he said, “what I expect,
Thine eye discover quickly, that whereof
Thy thought is dreaming.” Ever to that truth,
Which but the semblance of a falsehood wears,
A man, if possible, should bar his lip;
Since, although blameless, he incurs reproach.
But silence here were vain; and by these notes
Which now I sing, reader! I swear to thee,
So may they favour find to latest times!
That through the gross and murky air I spied
A shape come swimming up, that might have quell’d
The stoutest heart with wonder, in such guise
As one returns, who hath been down to loose
An anchor grappled fast against some rock,
Or to aught else that in the salt wave lies,
Who upward springing close draws in his feet.

CANTO XVII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"LO! the fell monster with the deadly sting!
Who passes mountains, breaks through fenced walls
And firm embattled spears, and with his filth
Taints all the world!" Thus me my guide address'd,
And beckon'd him, that he should come to shore,
Near to the stony causeway's utmost edge.



Forthwith that image vile of Fraud appear'd.
Canto XVII., line 7.

Forthwith that image vile of fraud appear'd,
His head and upper part expos'd on land,
But laid not on the shore his bestial train.
His face the semblance of a just man's wore,

So kind and gracious was its outward cheer;
The rest was serpent all: two shaggy claws
Reach'd to the armpits, and the back and breast,
And either side, were painted o'er with nodes
And orbits. Colours variegated more
Nor Turks nor Tartars e'er on cloth of state
With interchangeable embroidery wove,
Nor spread Arachne o'er her curious loom.
As ofttimes a light skiff, moor'd to the shore,
Stands part in water, part upon the land;
Or, as where dwells the greedy German boor,
The beaver settles watching for his prey;
So on the rim, that fenc'd the sand with rock,
Sat perch'd the fiend of evil. In the void
Glancing, his tail upturn'd its venomous fork,
With sting like scorpion's arm'd. Then thus my guide:
"Now need our way must turn few steps apart,
Far as to that ill beast, who couches there."

Thereat toward the right our downward course
We shap'd, and, better to escape the flame
And burning marle, ten paces on the verge
Proceeded. Soon as we to him arrive,
A little further on mine eye beholds
A tribe of spirits, seated on the sand
Near the wide chasm. Forthwith my master spake:
"That to the full thy knowledge may extend
Of all this round contains, go now, and mark
The mien these wear: but hold not long discourse.
Till thou returnest, I with him meantime
Will parley, that to us he may vouchsafe
The aid of his strong shoulders." Thus alone
Yet forward on the' extremity I pac'd
Of that seventh circle, where the mournful tribe
Were seated. At the eyes forth gush'd their pangs.
Against the vapours and the torrid soil
Alternately their shifting hands they plied.
Thus use the dogs in summer still to ply

Their jaws and feet by turns, when bitten sore
By gnats, or flies, or gadflies swarming round.

Noting the visages of some, who lay
Beneath the pelting of that dolorous fire,
One of them all I knew not; but perceiv'd,
That pendent from his neck each bore a pouch
With colours and with emblems various mark'd,
On which it seem'd as if their eye did feed.

And when amongst them looking round I came,
A yellow purse I saw with azure wrought,
That wore a lion's countenance and port.
Then still my sight pursuing its career,
Another I beheld, than blood more red.
A goose display of whiter wing than curd.
And one, who bore a fat and azure swine
Pictur'd on his white scrip, addressed me thus:
"What dost thou in this deep? Go now and know,
Since yet thou livest, that my neighbour here
Vitaliano on my left shall sit.
A Paduan with these Florentines am I.
Ofttimes they thunder in mine ears, exclaiming
'O haste that noble knight! he who the pouch
With the three beaks will bring!'" This said, he writh'd
The mouth, and loll'd the tongue out, like an ox
That licks his nostrils. I, lest longer stay
He ill might brook, who bade me stay not long,
Backward my steps from those sad spirits turn'd.

My guide already seated on the haunch
Of the fierce animal I found; and thus
He me encourag'd. "Be thou stout; be bold.
Down such a steep flight must we now descend!
Mount thou before: for that no power the tail
May have to harm thee, I will be i' th' midst."

As one, who hath an ague fit so near,
His nails already are turn'd blue, and he
Quivers all o'er, if he but eye the shade;

Quivers all o'er, if he but eye the shade;
Such was my cheer at hearing of his words.
But shame soon interpos'd her threat, who makes
The servant bold in presence of his lord.

I settled me upon those shoulders huge,
And would have said, but that the words to aid
My purpose came not, "Look thou clasp me firm!"

But he whose succour then not first I prov'd,
Soon as I mounted, in his arms aloft,
Embracing, held me up, and thus he spake:
"Geryon! now move thee! be thy wheeling gyres
Of ample circuit, easy thy descent.
Think on th' unusual burden thou sustain'st."

As a small vessel, back'ning out from land,
Her station quits; so thence the monster loos'd,
And when he felt himself at large, turn'd round
There where the breast had been, his forked tail.
Thus, like an eel, outstretch'd at length he steer'd,
Gath'ring the air up with retractile claws.

Not greater was the dread when Phaeton
The reins let drop at random, whence high heaven,
Whereof signs yet appear, was wrapt in flames;
Nor when ill-fated Icarus perceiv'd,
By liquefaction of the scalded wax,
The trusted pennons loosen'd from his loins,
His sire exclaiming loud, "Ill way thou keep'st!"
Than was my dread, when round me on each part
The air I view'd, and other object none
Save the fell beast. He slowly sailing, wheels
His downward motion, unobserv'd of me,
But that the wind, arising to my face,
Breathes on me from below. Now on our right
I heard the cataract beneath us leap
With hideous crash; whence bending down to' explore,
New terror I conceiv'd at the steep plunge:

New terror I conceived at the steep plunge.
Canto XVII., line 117.

For flames I saw, and wailings smote mine ear:
So that all trembling close I crouch’d my limbs,
And then distinguish’d, unperceiv’d before,
By the dread torments that on every side
Drew nearer, how our downward course we wound.

As falcon, that hath long been on the wing,
But lure nor bird hath seen, while in despair
The falconer cries, “Ah me! thou stoop’st to earth!”
Wearied descends, and swiftly down the sky
In many an orbit wheels, then lighting sits
At distance from his lord in angry mood;
So Geryon lighting places us on foot
Low down at base of the deep-furrow’d rock,
And, of his burden there discharg’d, forthwith
Sprang forward, like an arrow from the string

Sprang forward, like an arrow from the string.

CANTO XVIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

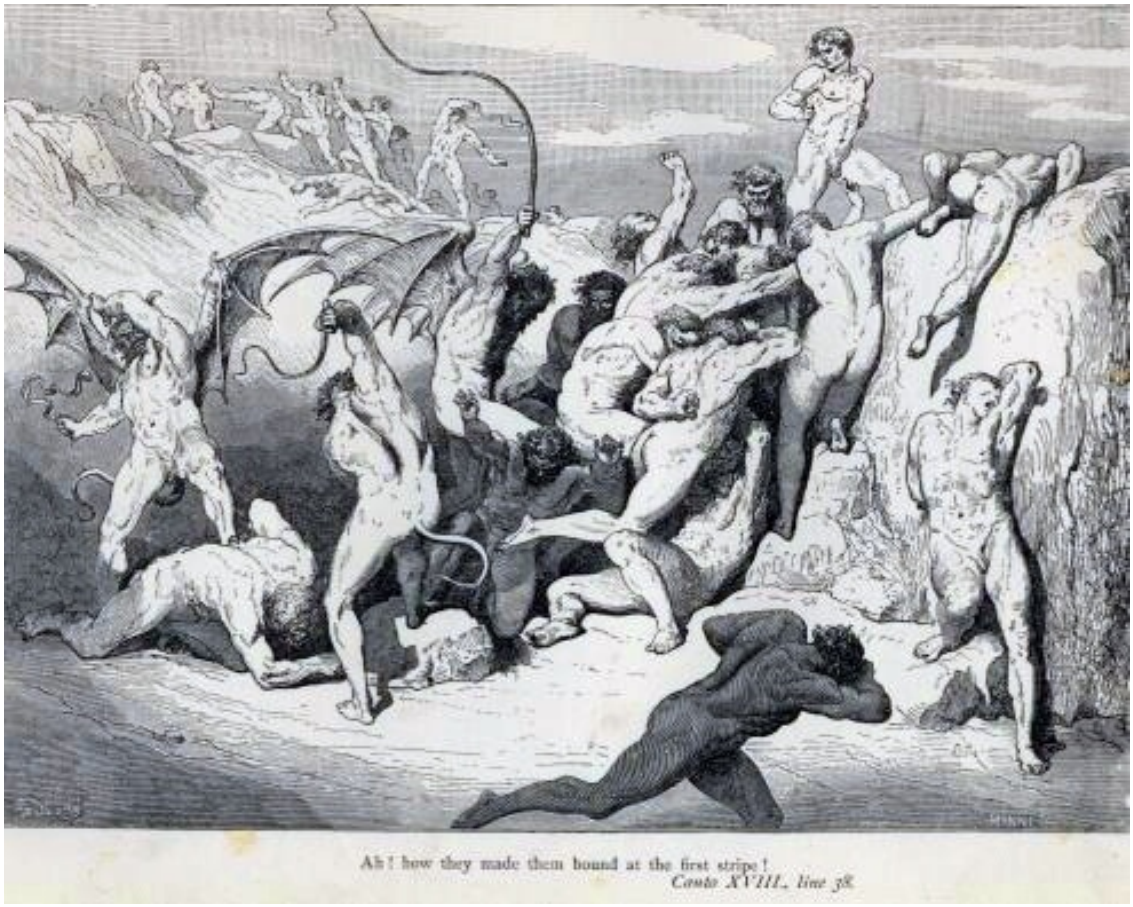
THERE is a place within the depths of hell
Call'd Malebolge, all of rock dark-stain'd
With hue ferruginous, e'en as the steep
That round it circling winds. Right in the midst
Of that abominable region, yawns
A spacious gulf profound, whereof the frame
Due time shall tell. The circle, that remains,
Throughout its round, between the gulf and base
Of the high craggy banks, successive forms
Ten trenches, in its hollow bottom sunk.

As where to guard the walls, full many a foss
Begirds some stately castle, sure defence
Affording to the space within, so here
Were model'd these; and as like fortresses
E'en from their threshold to the brink without,
Are flank'd with bridges; from the rock's low base
Thus flinty paths advanc'd, that 'cross the moles
And dikes, struck onward far as to the gulf,
That in one bound collected cuts them off.
Such was the place, wherein we found ourselves
From Geryon's back dislodg'd. The bard to left
Held on his way, and I behind him mov'd.

On our right hand new misery I saw,
New pains, new executioners of wrath,
That swarming peopled the first chasm. Below
Were naked sinners. Hitherward they came,
Meeting our faces from the middle point,
With us beyond but with a larger stride.
E'en thus the Romans, when the year returns
Of Jubilee, with better speed to rid
The thronging multitudes, their means devise
For such as pass the bridge; that on one side

All front toward the castle, and approach
Saint Peter's fane, on th' other towards the mount.

Each divers way along the grisly rock,
Horn'd demons I beheld, with lashes huge,
That on their back unmercifully smote.
Ah! how they made them bound at the first stripe!



Ah! how they made them bound at the first stripe!
Canto XVIII., line 38.

None for the second waited nor the third.

Meantime as on I pass'd, one met my sight
Whom soon as view'd; "Of him," cried I, "not yet
Mine eye hath had his fill." With fixed gaze
I therefore scann'd him. Straight the teacher kind
Paus'd with me, and consented I should walk
Backward a space, and the tormented spirit,
Who thought to hide him, bent his visage down.
But it avail'd him nought; for I exclaim'd:

“Thou who dost cast thy eye upon the ground,
Unless thy features do belie thee much,
Venedico art thou. But what brings thee
Into this bitter seas’ning?” He replied:
“Unwillingly I answer to thy words.
But thy clear speech, that to my mind recalls
The world I once inhabited, constrains me.
Know then ’twas I who led fair Ghisola
To do the Marquis’ will, however fame
The shameful tale have bruited. Nor alone
Bologna hither sendeth me to mourn
Rather with us the place is so o’erthrong’d
That not so many tongues this day are taught,
Betwixt the Reno and Savena’s stream,
To answer SIPA in their country’s phrase.
And if of that securer proof thou need,
Remember but our craving thirst for gold.”

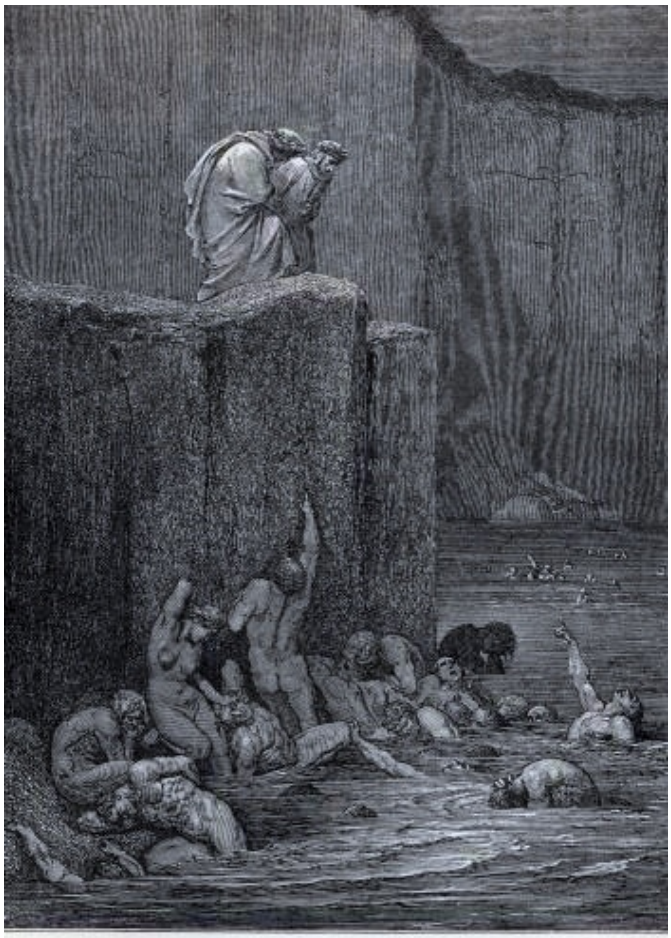
Him speaking thus, a demon with his thong
Struck, and exclaim’d, “Away! corrupter! here
Women are none for sale.” Forthwith I join’d
My escort, and few paces thence we came
To where a rock forth issued from the bank.
That easily ascended, to the right
Upon its splinter turning, we depart
From those eternal barriers. When arriv’d,
Where underneath the gaping arch lets pass
The scourged souls: “Pause here,” the teacher said,
“And let these others miserable, now
Strike on thy ken, faces not yet beheld,
For that together they with us have walk’d.”

From the old bridge we ey’d the pack, who came
From th’ other side towards us, like the rest,
Excoriate from the lash. My gentle guide,
By me unquestion’d, thus his speech resum’d:
“Behold that lofty shade, who this way tends,
And seems too woe-begone to drop a tear.
How yet the regal aspect he retains!

Jason is he, whose skill and prowess won
The ram from Colchos. To the Lemnian isle
His passage thither led him, when those bold
And pitiless women had slain all their males.
There he with tokens and fair witching words
Hypsipyle beguil'd, a virgin young,
Who first had all the rest herself beguil'd.
Impregnated he left her there forlorn.
Such is the guilt condemns him to this pain.
Here too Medea's inj'ries are avenged.
All bear him company, who like deceit
To his have practis'd. And thus much to know
Of the first vale suffice thee, and of those
Whom its keen torments urge." Now had we come
Where, crossing the next pier, the straighten'd path
Bestrides its shoulders to another arch.

Hence in the second chasm we heard the ghosts,
Who jibber in low melancholy sounds,
With wide-stretch'd nostrils snort, and on themselves
Smite with their palms. Upon the banks a scurf
From the foul steam condens'd, encrusting hung,
That held sharp combat with the sight and smell.

So hollow is the depth, that from no part,
Save on the summit of the rocky span,
Could I distinguish aught. Thus far we came;
And thence I saw, within the foss below,
A crowd immers'd in ordure, that appear'd
Draff of the human body. There beneath
Searching with eye inquisitive, I mark'd
One with his head so grim'd, 't were hard to deem,
If he were clerk or layman. Loud he cried:
"Why greedily thus bendest more on me,
Than on these other filthy ones, thy ken?"

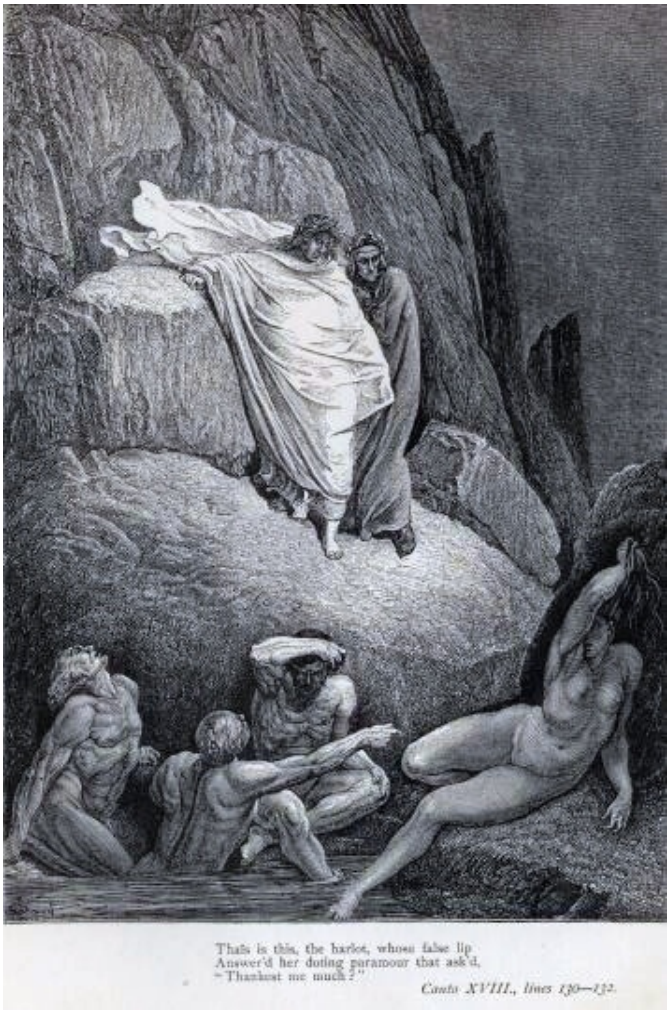


"Why greedily thus bendest more on me,
Than on these other filthy ones, thy ken?"
Canto XVIII., lines 116, 117.

"Because if true my mem'ry," I replied,
"I heretofore have seen thee with dry locks,
And thou Alessio art of Lucca sprung.
Therefore than all the rest I scan thee more."

Then beating on his brain these words he spake:
"Me thus low down my flatteries have sunk,
Wherewith I ne'er enough could glut my tongue."

My leader thus: "A little further stretch
Thy face, that thou the visage well mayst note
Of that besotted, sluttish courtezan,
Who there doth rend her with defiled nails,
Now crouching down, now risen on her feet.



Thais is this, the harlot, whose false lip
Answer'd her doting paramour that ask'd,
"Thankest me much?"
Canto XVIII., lines 130—132.

"Thais is this, the harlot, whose false lip
Answer'd her doting paramour that ask'd,
'Thankest me much!'— 'Say rather wondrously,'
And seeing this here satiate be our view."

CANTO XIX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

WOE to thee, Simon Magus! woe to you,
His wretched followers! who the things of God,
Which should be wedded unto goodness, them,
Rapacious as ye are, do prostitute
For gold and silver in adultery!
Now must the trumpet sound for you, since yours
Is the third chasm. Upon the following vault
We now had mounted, where the rock impends
Directly o'er the centre of the foss.

Wisdom Supreme! how wonderful the art,
Which thou dost manifest in heaven, in earth,
And in the evil world, how just a meed
Allotting by thy virtue unto all!

I saw the livid stone, throughout the sides
And in its bottom full of apertures,
All equal in their width, and circular each,
Nor ample less nor larger they appear'd
Than in Saint John's fair dome of me belov'd
Those fram'd to hold the pure baptismal streams,
One of the which I brake, some few years past,
To save a whelming infant; and be this
A seal to undeceive whoever doubts
The motive of my deed. From out the mouth
Of every one, emerg'd a sinner's feet
And of the legs high upward as the calf
The rest beneath was hid. On either foot
The soles were burning, whence the flexile joints
Glanc'd with such violent motion, as had snapt
Asunder cords or twisted withs. As flame,
Feeding on unctuous matter, glides along
The surface, scarcely touching where it moves;
So here, from heel to point, glided the flames.

“Master! say who is he, than all the rest
Glancing in fiercer agony, on whom
A ruddier flame doth prey?” I thus inquir’d.

“If thou be willing,” he replied, “that I
Carry thee down, where least the slope bank falls,
He of himself shall tell thee and his wrongs.”

I then: “As pleases thee to me is best.
Thou art my lord; and know’st that ne’er I quit
Thy will: what silence hides that knowest thou.”
Thereat on the fourth pier we came, we turn’d,
And on our left descended to the depth,
A narrow strait and perforated close.
Nor from his side my leader set me down,
Till to his orifice he brought, whose limb
Quiv’ring express’d his pang. ”Whoe’er thou art,
Sad spirit! thus revers’d, and as a stake
Driv’n in the soil!” I in these words began,
“If thou be able, utter forth thy voice.”

There stood I like the friar, that doth shrive
A wretch for murder doom'd.
Canto XIX., lines 10, 11.

There stood I like the friar, that doth shrive
A wretch for murder doom’d, who e’en when fix’d,
Calleth him back, whence death awhile delays.

He shouted: “Ha! already standest there?
Already standest there, O Boniface!
By many a year the writing play’d me false.
So early dost thou surfeit with the wealth,
For which thou fearedst not in guile to take
The lovely lady, and then mangle her?”

I felt as those who, piercing not the drift
Of answer made them, stand as if expos’d
In mockery, nor know what to reply,
When Virgil thus admonish’d: “Tell him quick,
I am not he. not he. whom thou believ’st.”

And I, as was enjoin'd me, straight replied.

That heard, the spirit all did wrench his feet,
And sighing next in woeful accent spake:
"What then of me requirest?" "If to know
So much imports thee, who I am, that thou
Hast therefore down the bank descended, learn
That in the mighty mantle I was rob'd,
And of a she-bear was indeed the son,
So eager to advance my whelps, that there
My having in my purse above I stow'd,
And here myself. Under my head are dragg'd
The rest, my predecessors in the guilt
Of simony. Stretch'd at their length they lie
Along an opening in the rock. 'Midst them
I also low shall fall, soon as he comes,
For whom I took thee, when so hastily
I question'd. But already longer time
Hath pass'd, since my souls kindled, and I thus
Upturn'd have stood, than is his doom to stand
Planted with fiery feet. For after him,
One yet of deeds more ugly shall arrive,
From forth the west, a shepherd without law,
Fated to cover both his form and mine.
He a new Jason shall be call'd, of whom
In Maccabees we read; and favour such
As to that priest his king indulgent show'd,
Shall be of France's monarch shown to him."

I know not if I here too far presum'd,
But in this strain I answer'd: "Tell me now,
What treasures from St. Peter at the first
Our Lord demanded, when he put the keys
Into his charge? Surely he ask'd no more
But, Follow me! Nor Peter nor the rest
Or gold or silver of Matthias took,
When lots were cast upon the forfeit place
Of the condemned soul. Abide thou then;

Thy punishment of right is merited:
And look thou well to that ill-gotten coin,
Which against Charles thy hardihood inspir'd.
If reverence of the keys restrain'd me not,
Which thou in happier time didst hold, I yet
Severer speech might use. Your avarice
O'ercasts the world with mourning, under foot
Treading the good, and raising bad men up.
Of shepherds, like to you, th' Evangelist
Was ware, when her, who sits upon the waves,
With kings in filthy whoredom he beheld,
She who with seven heads tower'd at her birth,
And from ten horns her proof of glory drew,
Long as her spouse in virtue took delight.
Of gold and silver ye have made your god,
Diff'ring wherein from the idolater,
But he that worships one, a hundred ye?
Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth,
Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower,
Which the first wealthy Father gain'd from thee!"

Meanwhile, as thus I sung, he, whether wrath
Or conscience smote him, violent upsprang
Spinning on either sole. I do believe
My teacher well was pleas'd, with so compos'd
A lip, he listen'd ever to the sound
Of the true words I utter'd. In both arms
He caught, and to his bosom lifting me
Upward retrac'd the way of his descent.

Nor weary of his weight he press'd me close,
Till to the summit of the rock we came,
Our passage from the fourth to the fifth pier.
His cherish'd burden there gently he plac'd
Upon the rugged rock and steep, a path
Not easy for the clamb'ring goat to mount.

Thence to my view another vale appear'd

CANTO XX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

AND now the verse proceeds to torments new,
Fit argument of this the twentieth strain
Of the first song, whose awful theme records
The spirits whelm'd in woe. Earnest I look'd
Into the depth, that open'd to my view,
Moisten'd with tears of anguish, and beheld
A tribe, that came along the hollow vale,
In silence weeping: such their step as walk
Quires chanting solemn litanies on earth.

As on them more direct mine eye descends,
Each wondrously seem'd to be revers'd
At the neck-bone, so that the countenance
Was from the reins averted: and because
None might before him look, they were compell'd
To' advance with backward gait. Thus one perhaps
Hath been by force of palsy clean transpos'd,
But I ne'er saw it nor believe it so.

Now, reader! think within thyself, so God
Fruit of thy reading give thee! how I long
Could keep my visage dry, when I beheld
Near me our form distorted in such guise,
That on the hinder parts fall'n from the face
The tears down-streaming roll'd. Against a rock
I leant and wept, so that my guide exclaim'd:
"What, and art thou too witless as the rest?
Here pity most doth show herself alive,
When she is dead. What guilt exceedeth his,
Who with Heaven's judgment in his passion strives?
Raise up thy head, raise up, and see the man,
Before whose eyes earth gap'd in Thebes, when all
Cried out, 'Amphiaraus, whither rushest?
'Why leavest thou the war?' He not the less
Fell ruining far as to Minos down,

Whose grapple none eludes. Lo! how he makes
The breast his shoulders, and who once too far
Before him wish'd to see, now backward looks,
And treads reverse his path. Tiresias note,
Who semblance chang'd, when woman he became
Of male, through every limb transform'd, and then
Once more behov'd him with his rod to strike
The two entwining serpents, ere the plumes,
That mark'd the better sex, might shoot again.

"Aruns, with more his belly facing, comes.
On Luni's mountains 'midst the marbles white,
Where delves Carrara's hind, who wons beneath,
A cavern was his dwelling, whence the stars
And main-sea wide in boundless view he held.

"The next, whose loosen'd tresses overspread
Her bosom, which thou seest not (for each hair
On that side grows) was Manto, she who search'd
Through many regions, and at length her seat
Fix'd in my native land, whence a short space
My words detain thy audience. When her sire
From life departed, and in servitude
The city dedicate to Bacchus mourn'd,
Long time she went a wand'rer through the world.
Aloft in Italy's delightful land
A lake there lies, at foot of that proud Alp,
That o'er the Tyrol locks Germania in,
Its name Benacus, which a thousand rills,
Methinks, and more, water between the vale
Camonica and Garda and the height
Of Apennine remote. There is a spot
At midway of that lake, where he who bears
Of Trento's flock the past'ral staff, with him
Of Brescia, and the Veronese, might each
Passing that way his benediction give.
A garrison of goodly site and strong
Peschiera stands, to awe with front oppos'd
The Bergamese and Brescian, whence the shore

More slope each way descends. There, whatsoev'er
Benacus' bosom holds not, tumbling o'er
Down falls, and winds a river flood beneath
Through the green pastures. Soon as in his course
The steam makes head, Benacus then no more
They call the name, but Mincius, till at last
Reaching Governo into Po he falls.
Not far his course hath run, when a wide flat
It finds, which overstretchmg as a marsh
It covers, pestilent in summer oft.
Hence journeying, the savage maiden saw
'Midst of the fen a territory waste
And naked of inhabitants. To shun
All human converse, here she with her slaves
Plying her arts remain'd, and liv'd, and left
Her body tenantless. Thenceforth the tribes,
Who round were scatter'd, gath'ring to that place
Assembled; for its strength was great, enclos'd
On all parts by the fen. On those dead bones
They rear'd themselves a city, for her sake,
Calling it Mantua, who first chose the spot,
Nor ask'd another omen for the name,
Wherein more numerous the people dwelt,
Ere Casalodi's madness by deceit
Was wrong'd of Pinamonte. If thou hear
Henceforth another origin assign'd
Of that my country, I forewarn thee now,
That falsehood none beguile thee of the truth."

I answer'd: "Teacher, I conclude thy words
So certain, that all else shall be to me
As embers lacking life. But now of these,
Who here proceed, instruct me, if thou see
Any that merit more especial note.
For thereon is my mind alone intent."

He straight replied: "That spirit, from whose cheek
The beard sweeps o'er his shoulders brown, what time
Graecia was emptied of her males, that scarce

The cradles were supplied, the seer was he
In Aulis, who with Calchas gave the sign
When first to cut the cable. Him they nam'd
Eurypilus: so sings my tragic strain,
In which majestic measure well thou know'st,
Who know'st it all. That other, round the loins
So slender of his shape, was Michael Scot,
Practis'd in ev'ry slight of magic wile.

"Guido Bonatti see: Asdente mark,
Who now were willing, he had tended still
The thread and cordwain; and too late repents.

"See next the wretches, who the needle left,
The shuttle and the spindle, and became
Diviners: baneful witcheries they wrought
With images and herbs. But onward now:
For now doth Cain with fork of thorns confine
On either hemisphere, touching the wave
Beneath the towers of Seville. Yesternight
The moon was round. Thou mayst remember well:
For she good service did thee in the gloom
Of the deep wood." This said, both onward mov'd.

CANTO XXI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

THUS we from bridge to bridge, with other talk,
The which my drama cares not to rehearse,
Pass'd on; and to the summit reaching, stood
To view another gap, within the round
Of Malebolge, other bootless pangs.

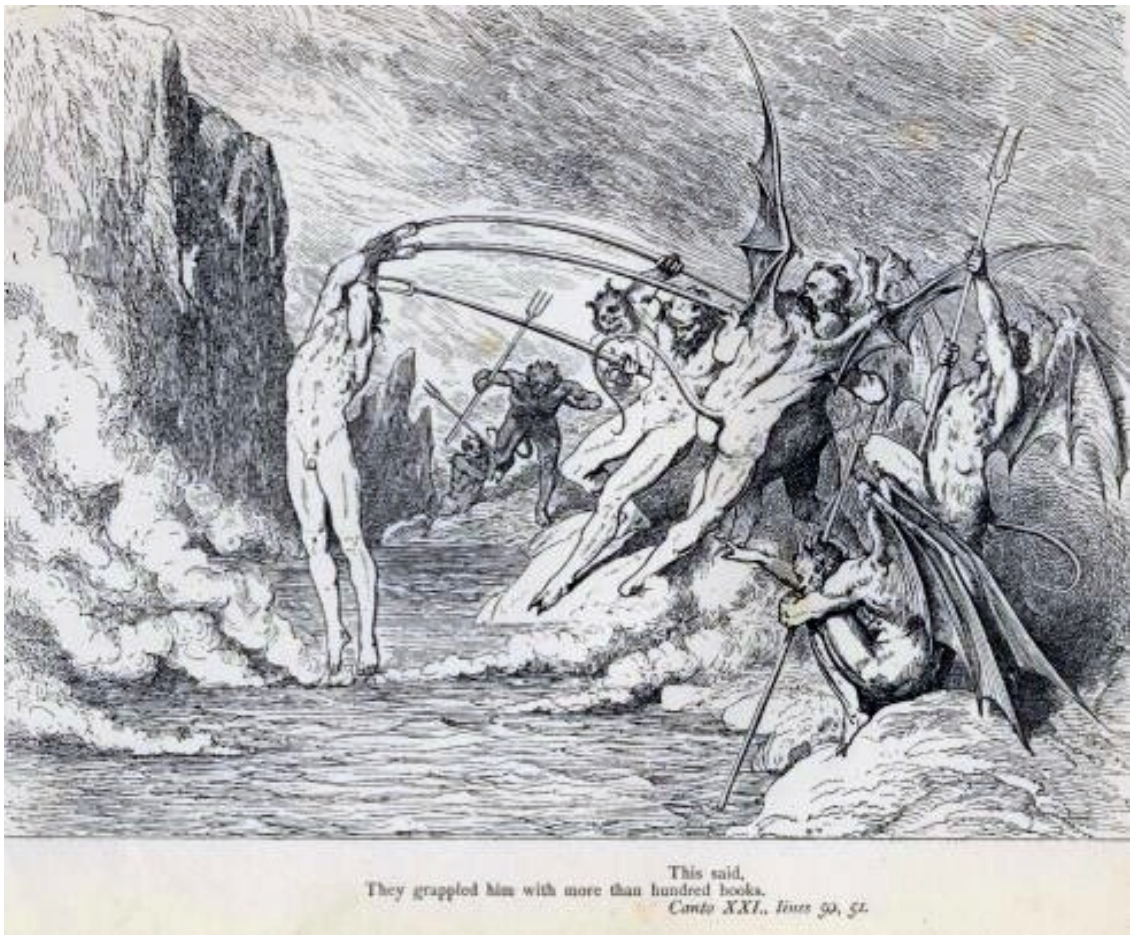
Marvelous darkness shadow'd o'er the place.

In the Venetians' arsenal as boils
Through wintry months tenacious pitch, to smear
Their unsound vessels; for th' inclement time
Sea-faring men restrains, and in that while
His bark one builds anew, another stops
The ribs of his, that hath made many a voyage;
One hammers at the prow, one at the poop;
This shapeth oars, that other cables twirls,
The mizen one repairs and main-sail rent
So not by force of fire but art divine
Boil'd here a glutinous thick mass, that round
Lim'd all the shore beneath. I that beheld,
But therein nought distinguish'd, save the surge,
Rais'd by the boiling, in one mighty swell
Heave, and by turns subsiding and fall. While there
I fix'd my ken below, "Mark! mark!" my guide
Exclaiming, drew me towards him from the place,
Wherein I stood. I turn'd myself as one,
Impatient to behold that which beheld
He needs must shun, whom sudden fear unmans,
That he his flight delays not for the view.
Behind me I discern'd a devil black,
That running, up advanc'd along the rock.
Ah! what fierce cruelty his look bespake!
In act how bitter did he seem, with wings
Buoyant outstretch'd and feet of nimblest tread!
His shoulder proudly eminent and sharp

Was with a sinner charg'd; by either haunch
He held him, the foot's sinew griping fast.

"Ye of our bridge!" he cried, "keen-talon'd fiends!
Lo! one of Santa Zita's elders! Him
Whelm ye beneath, while I return for more.
That land hath store of such. All men are there,
Except Bonturo, barterers: of 'no'
For lucre there an 'aye' is quickly made."

Him dashing down, o'er the rough rock he turn'd,
Nor ever after thief a mastiff loos'd
Sped with like eager haste. That other sank
And forthwith writing to the surface rose.
But those dark demons, shrouded by the bridge,
Cried "Here the hallow'd visage saves not: here
Is other swimming than in Serchio's wave.
Wherefore if thou desire we rend thee not,
Take heed thou mount not o'er the pitch." This said,
They grappled him with more than hundred hooks,
And shouted: "Cover'd thou must sport thee here;
So, if thou canst, in secret mayst thou filch."



E’en thus the cook bestirs him, with his grooms,
To thrust the flesh into the caldron down
With flesh-hooks, that it float not on the top.

Me then my guide bespake: “Lest they descry,
That thou art here, behind a craggy rock
Bend low and screen thee; and whate’er of force
Be offer’d me, or insult, fear thou not:
For I am well advis’d, who have been erst
In the like fray.” Beyond the bridge’s head
Therewith he pass’d, and reaching the sixth pier,
Behov’d him then a forehead terror-proof.

With storm and fury, as when dogs rush forth
Upon the poor man’s back, who suddenly
From whence he standeth makes his suit; so rush’d
Those from beneath the arch, and against him

Their weapons all they pointed. He aloud:
“Be none of you outrageous: ere your time
Dare seize me, come forth from amongst you one,

“Be none of you outrageous.”
Canto XXI., line 70.

“Who having heard my words, decide he then
If he shall tear these limbs.” They shouted loud,
“Go, Malacoda!” Whereat one advanc’d,
The others standing firm, and as he came,
“What may this turn avail him?” he exclaim’d.

“Believ’st thou, Malacoda! I had come
Thus far from all your skirmishing secure,”
My teacher answered, “without will divine
And destiny propitious? Pass we then
For so Heaven’s pleasure is, that I should lead
Another through this savage wilderness.”

Forthwith so fell his pride, that he let drop
The instrument of torture at his feet,
And to the rest exclaim'd: "We have no power
To strike him." Then to me my guide: "O thou!
Who on the bridge among the crags dost sit
Low crouching, safely now to me return."

I rose, and towards him moved with speed: the fiends
Meantime all forward drew: me terror seiz'd
Lest they should break the compact they had made.
Thus issuing from Caprona, once I saw
Th' infantry dreading, lest his covenant
The foe should break; so close he hemm'd them round.

I to my leader's side adher'd, mine eyes
With fixt and motionless observance bent
On their unkindly visage. They their hooks
Protruding, one the other thus bespake:
"Wilt thou I touch him on the hip?" To whom
Was answer'd: "Even so; nor miss thy aim."

But he, who was in conf'rence with my guide,
Turn'd rapid round, and thus the demon spake:
"Stay, stay thee, Scarmiglione!" Then to us
He added: "Further footing to your step
This rock affords not, shiver'd to the base
Of the sixth arch. But would you still proceed,
Up by this cavern go: not distant far,
Another rock will yield you passage safe.
Yesterday, later by five hours than now,
Twelve hundred threescore years and six had fill'd
The circuit of their course, since here the way
Was broken. Thitherward I straight dispatch
Certain of these my scouts, who shall espy
If any on the surface bask. With them
Go ye: for ye shall find them nothing fell.
Come Alichino forth," with that he cried,
"And Calcabrina, and Cagnazzo thou!
The troop of ten let Barbariccia lead.

With Libicocco Draghinazzo haste,
Fang’d Ciriatto, Grafflacane fierce,
And Farfarello, and mad Rubicant.
Search ye around the bubbling tar. For these,
In safety lead them, where the other crag
Uninterrupted traverses the dens.”

I then: “O master! what a sight is there!
Ah! without escort, journey we alone,
Which, if thou know the way, I covet not.
Unless thy prudence fail thee, dost not mark
How they do gnarl upon us, and their scowl
Threatens us present tortures?” He replied:
“I charge thee fear not: let them, as they will,
Gnarl on: ‘t is but in token of their spite
Against the souls, who mourn in torment steep’d.”

To leftward o’er the pier they turn’d; but each
Had first between his teeth prest close the tongue,
Toward their leader for a signal looking,
Which he with sound obscene triumphant gave.

CANTO XXII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

IT hath been heretofore my chance to see
Horsemen with martial order shifting camp,
To onset sallying, or in muster rang'd,
Or in retreat sometimes outstretch'd for flight;
Light-armed squadrons and fleet foragers
Scouring thy plains, Arezzo! have I seen,
And clashing tournaments, and tilting jousts,
Now with the sound of trumpets, now of bells,
Tabors, or signals made from castled heights,
And with inventions multiform, our own,
Or introduc'd from foreign land; but ne'er
To such a strange recorder I beheld,
In evolution moving, horse nor foot,
Nor ship, that tack'd by sign from land or star.

With the ten demons on our way we went;
Ah fearful company! but in the church
With saints, with gluttons at the tavern's mess.

Still earnest on the pitch I gaz'd, to mark
All things whate'er the chasm contain'd, and those
Who burn'd within. As dolphins, that, in sign
To mariners, heave high their arched backs,
That thence forewarn'd they may advise to save
Their threaten'd vessels; so, at intervals,
To ease the pain his back some sinner show'd,
Then hid more nimbly than the lightning glance.

E'en as the frogs, that of a wat'ry moat
Stand at the brink, with the jaws only out,
Their feet and of the trunk all else concealed,
Thus on each part the sinners stood, but soon
As Barbariccia was at hand, so they
Drew back under the wave. I saw, and yet
My heart doth stagger, one, that waited thus,

As it befalls that oft one frog remains,
While the next springs away: and Graffiacan,
Who of the fiends was nearest, grappling seiz'd
His clotted locks, and dragg'd him sprawling up,
That he appear'd to me an otter. Each
Already by their names I knew, so well
When they were chosen, I observ'd, and mark'd
How one the other call'd. "O Rubicant!
See that his hide thou with thy talons flay,"
Shouted together all the cursed crew.

Then I: "Inform thee, master! if thou may,
What wretched soul is this, on whom their hand
His foes have laid." My leader to his side
Approach'd, and whence he came inquir'd, to whom
Was answer'd thus: "Born in Navarre's domain
My mother plac'd me in a lord's retinue,
For she had borne me to a losel vile,
A spendthrift of his substance and himself.
The good king Thibault after that I serv'd,
To peculating here my thoughts were turn'd,
Whereof I give account in this dire heat."

Straight Ciriatto, from whose mouth a tusk
Issued on either side, as from a boar,
Ript him with one of these. 'Twixt evil claws
The mouse had fall'n: but Barbariccia cried,
Seizing him with both arms: "Stand thou apart,
While I do fix him on my prong transpierc'd."
Then added, turning to my guide his face,
"Inquire of him, if more thou wish to learn,
Ere he again be rent." My leader thus:
"Then tell us of the partners in thy guilt;
Knowest thou any sprung of Latian land
Under the tar?"— "I parted," he replied,
"But now from one, who sojourn'd not far thence;
So were I under shelter now with him!
Nor hook nor talon then should scare me more." — .

“Too long we suffer,” Libicocco cried,
Then, darting forth a prong, seiz’d on his arm,
And mangled bore away the sinewy part.
Him Draghinazzo by his thighs beneath
Would next have caught, whence angrily their chief,
Turning on all sides round, with threat’ning brow
Restrain’d them. When their strife a little ceas’d,
Of him, who yet was gazing on his wound,
My teacher thus without delay inquir’d:
“Who was the spirit, from whom by evil hap
Parting, as thou has told, thou cam’st to shore?” —

“It was the friar Gomita,” he rejoin’d,
“He of Gallura, vessel of all guile,
Who had his master’s enemies in hand,
And us’d them so that they commend him well.
Money he took, and them at large dismiss’d.
So he reports: and in each other charge
Committed to his keeping, play’d the part
Of barterer to the height: with him doth herd
The chief of Logodoro, Michel Zanche.
Sardinia is a theme, whereof their tongue
Is never weary. Out! alas! behold
That other, how he grins! More would I say,
But tremble lest he mean to maul me sore.”

Their captain then to Farfarello turning,
Who roll’d his moony eyes in act to strike,
Rebuk’d him thus: “Off! cursed bird! Avaunt!” —

“If ye desire to see or hear,” he thus
Quaking with dread resum’d, “or Tuscan spirits
Or Lombard, I will cause them to appear.
Meantime let these ill talons bate their fury,
So that no vengeance they may fear from them,
And I, remaining in this self-same place,
Will for myself but one, make sev’n appear,
When my shrill whistle shall be heard; for so
Our custom is to call each other up.”

Cagnazzo at that word deriding grinn’d,
Then wagg’d the head and spake: “Hear his device,
Mischievous as he is, to plunge him down.”

Whereto he thus, who fail’d not in rich store
Of nice-wove toils; “Mischief forsooth extreme,
Meant only to procure myself more woe!”

No longer Alichino then refrain’d,
But thus, the rest gainsaying, him bespake:
“If thou do cast thee down, I not on foot
Will chase thee, but above the pitch will beat
My plumes. Quit we the vantage ground, and let
The bank be as a shield, that we may see
If singly thou prevail against us all.”

Now, reader, of new sport expect to hear!

They each one turn’d his eyes to the’ other shore,
He first, who was the hardest to persuade.
The spirit of Navarre chose well his time,
Planted his feet on land, and at one leap
Escaping disappointed their resolve.

Them quick resentment stung, but him the most,
Who was the cause of failure; in pursuit
He therefore sped, exclaiming: “Thou art caught.”

In pursuit
He therefore sped, exclaiming, "Thou art caught."
Canto XXII., lines 125, 126.

But little it avail'd: terror outstripp'd
His following flight: the other plung'd beneath,
And he with upward pinion rais'd his breast:
E'en thus the water-fowl, when she perceives
The falcon near, dives instant down, while he
Enrag'd and spent retires. That mockery
In Calcabrina fury stirr'd, who flew
After him, with desire of strife inflam'd;
And, for the barterer had 'scap'd, so turn'd
His talons on his comrade. O'er the dyke
In grapple close they join'd; but the' other prov'd
A goshawk able to rend well his foe;

And in the boiling lake both fell. The heat
Was umpire soon between them, but in vain
To lift themselves they strove, so fast were glued
Their pennons. Barbariccia, as the rest,
That chance lamenting, four in flight dispatch'd
From the' other coast, with all their weapons arm'd.
They, to their post on each side speedily
Descending, stretch'd their hooks toward the fiends,
Who flounder'd, inly burning from their scars:
And we departing left them to that broil.

CANTO XXIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

IN silence and in solitude we went,
One first, the other following his steps,
As minor friars journeying on their road.

The present fray had turn'd my thoughts to muse
Upon old Aesop's fable, where he told
What fate unto the mouse and frog befell.
For language hath not sounds more like in sense,
Than are these chances, if the origin
And end of each be heedfully compar'd.
And as one thought bursts from another forth,
So afterward from that another sprang,
Which added doubly to my former fear.
For thus I reason'd: "These through us have been
So foil'd, with loss and mock'ry so complete,
As needs must sting them sore. If anger then
Be to their evil will conjoin'd, more fell
They shall pursue us, than the savage hound
Snatches the leveret, panting 'twixt his jaws."

Already I perceiv'd my hair stand all
On end with terror, and look'd eager back.

"Teacher," I thus began, "if speedily
Thyself and me thou hide not, much I dread
Those evil talons. Even now behind
They urge us: quick imagination works
So forcibly, that I already feel them."

He answer'd: "Were I form'd of leaded glass,
I should not sooner draw unto myself
Thy outward image, than I now imprint
That from within. This moment came thy thoughts
Presented before mine, with similar act
And count'nance similar, so that from both

I one design have fram'd. If the right coast
Incline so much, that we may thence descend
Into the other chasm, we shall escape
Secure from this imagined pursuit."

He had not spoke his purpose to the end,
When I from far beheld them with spread wings
Approach to take us. Suddenly my guide
Caught me, ev'n as a mother that from sleep
Is by the noise arous'd, and near her sees
The climbing fires, who snatches up her babe
And flies ne'er pausing, careful more of him
Than of herself, that but a single vest
Clings round her limbs. Down from the jutting beach
Supine he cast him, to that pendent rock,
Which closes on one part the other chasm.

Never ran water with such hurrying pace
Adown the tube to turn a landmill's wheel,
When nearest it approaches to the spokes,
As then along that edge my master ran,
Carrying me in his bosom, as a child,
Not a companion. Scarcely had his feet
Reach'd to the lowest of the bed beneath,

When over us the steep they reach’d; but fear
In him was none; for that high Providence,
Which plac’d them ministers of the fifth foss,
Power of departing thence took from them all.

There in the depth we saw a painted tribe,
Who pac’d with tardy steps around, and wept,
Faint in appearance and o’ercome with toil.
Caps had they on, with hoods, that fell low down
Before their eyes, in fashion like to those
Worn by the monks in Cologne. Their outside
Was overlaid with gold, dazzling to view,
But leaden all within, and of such weight,
That Frederick’s compar’d to these were straw.
Oh, everlasting wearisome attire!

We yet once more with them together turn’d
To leftward, on their dismal moan intent.
But by the weight oppress’d, so slowly came
The fainting people, that our company
Was chang’d at every movement of the step.

Whence I my guide address’d: “See that thou find
Some spirit, whose name may by his deeds be known,
And to that end look round thee as thou go’st.”

Then one, who understood the Tuscan voice,
Cried after us aloud: “Hold in your feet,
Ye who so swiftly speed through the dusk air.
Perchance from me thou shalt obtain thy wish.”

Whereat my leader, turning, me bespake:
“Pause, and then onward at their pace proceed.”

I staid, and saw two Spirits in whose look
Impatient eagerness of mind was mark’d
To overtake me; but the load they bare
And narrow path retarded their approach.

Soon as arriv’d, they with an eye askance
Perus’d me, but spake not: then turning each
To other thus conferring said: “This one
Seems, by the action of his throat, alive.
And, be they dead, what privilege allows
They walk unmantled by the cumbrous stole?”

Then thus to me: “Tuscan, who visitest
The college of the mourning hypocrites,
Disdain not to instruct us who thou art.”

“By Arno’s pleasant stream,” I thus replied,
“In the great city I was bred and grew,
And wear the body I have ever worn.
but who are ye, from whom such mighty grief,
As now I witness, courseth down your cheeks?
What torment breaks forth in this bitter woe?”
“Our bonnets gleaming bright with orange hue,”
One of them answer’d, “are so leaden gross,
That with their weight they make the balances
To crack beneath them. Joyous friars we were,
Bologna’s natives, Catalano I,
He Loderingo nam’d, and by thy land
Together taken, as men used to take

A single and indifferent arbiter,
To reconcile their strifes. How there we sped,
Gardingo's vicinage can best declare."

"O friars!" I began, "your miseries—"
But there brake off, for one had caught my eye,
Fix'd to a cross with three stakes on the ground:
He, when he saw me, writh'd himself, throughout
Distorted, ruffling with deep sighs his beard.
And Catalano, who thereof was 'ware,

"That pierced spirit, whom intent
Thou view'st, was he who gave the Pharisees
Counsel, that it were fitting for one man
To suffer for the people."

P

Canto XXIII., lines 117—120.

Thus spake: "That pierced spirit, whom intent
Thou view'st, was he who gave the Pharisees
Counsel, that it were fitting for one man
To suffer for the people. He doth lie

Transverse; nor any passes, but him first
Behoves make feeling trial how each weighs.
In straits like this along the foss are plac'd
The father of his consort, and the rest
Partakers in that council, seed of ill
And sorrow to the Jews." I noted then,
How Virgil gaz'd with wonder upon him,
Thus abjectly extended on the cross
In banishment eternal. To the friar
He next his words address'd: "We pray ye tell,
If so be lawful, whether on our right
Lies any opening in the rock, whereby
We both may issue hence, without constraint
On the dark angels, that compell'd they come
To lead us from this depth." He thus replied:
"Nearer than thou dost hope, there is a rock
From the next circle moving, which o'ersteps
Each vale of horror, save that here his cope
Is shatter'd. By the ruin ye may mount:
For on the side it slants, and most the height
Rises below." With head bent down awhile
My leader stood, then spake: "He warn'd us ill,
Who yonder hangs the sinners on his hook."

To whom the friar: "At Bologna erst
I many vices of the devil heard,
Among the rest was said, 'He is a liar,
And the father of lies!'" When he had spoke,
My leader with large strides proceeded on,
Somewhat disturb'd with anger in his look.

I therefore left the spirits heavy laden,
And following, his beloved footsteps mark'd.

CANTO XXIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

IN the year's early nonage, when the sun
Tempers his tresses in Aquarius' urn,
And now towards equal day the nights recede,
When as the rime upon the earth puts on
Her dazzling sister's image, but not long
Her milder sway endures, then riseth up
The village hind, whom fails his wintry store,
And looking out beholds the plain around
All whiten'd, whence impatiently he smites
His thighs, and to his hut returning in,
There paces to and fro, wailing his lot,
As a discomfited and helpless man;
Then comes he forth again, and feels new hope
Spring in his bosom, finding e'en thus soon
The world hath chang'd its count'nance, grasps his crook,
And forth to pasture drives his little flock:
So me my guide dishearten'd when I saw
His troubled forehead, and so speedily
That ill was cur'd; for at the fallen bridge
Arriving, towards me with a look as sweet,
He turn'd him back, as that I first beheld
At the steep mountain's foot. Regarding well
The ruin, and some counsel first maintain'd
With his own thought, he open'd wide his arm
And took me up. As one, who, while he works,
Computes his labour's issue, that he seems
Still to foresee the' effect, so lifting me
Up to the summit of one peak, he fix'd
His eye upon another. "Grapple that,"
Said he, "but first make proof, if it be such
As will sustain thee." For one capp'd with lead
This were no journey. Scarcely he, though light,
And I, though onward push'd from crag to crag,
Could mount. And if the precinct of this coast

Were not less ample than the last, for him
I know not, but my strength had surely fail'd.
But Malebolge all toward the mouth
Inclining of the nethermost abyss,
The site of every valley hence requires,
That one side upward slope, the other fall.

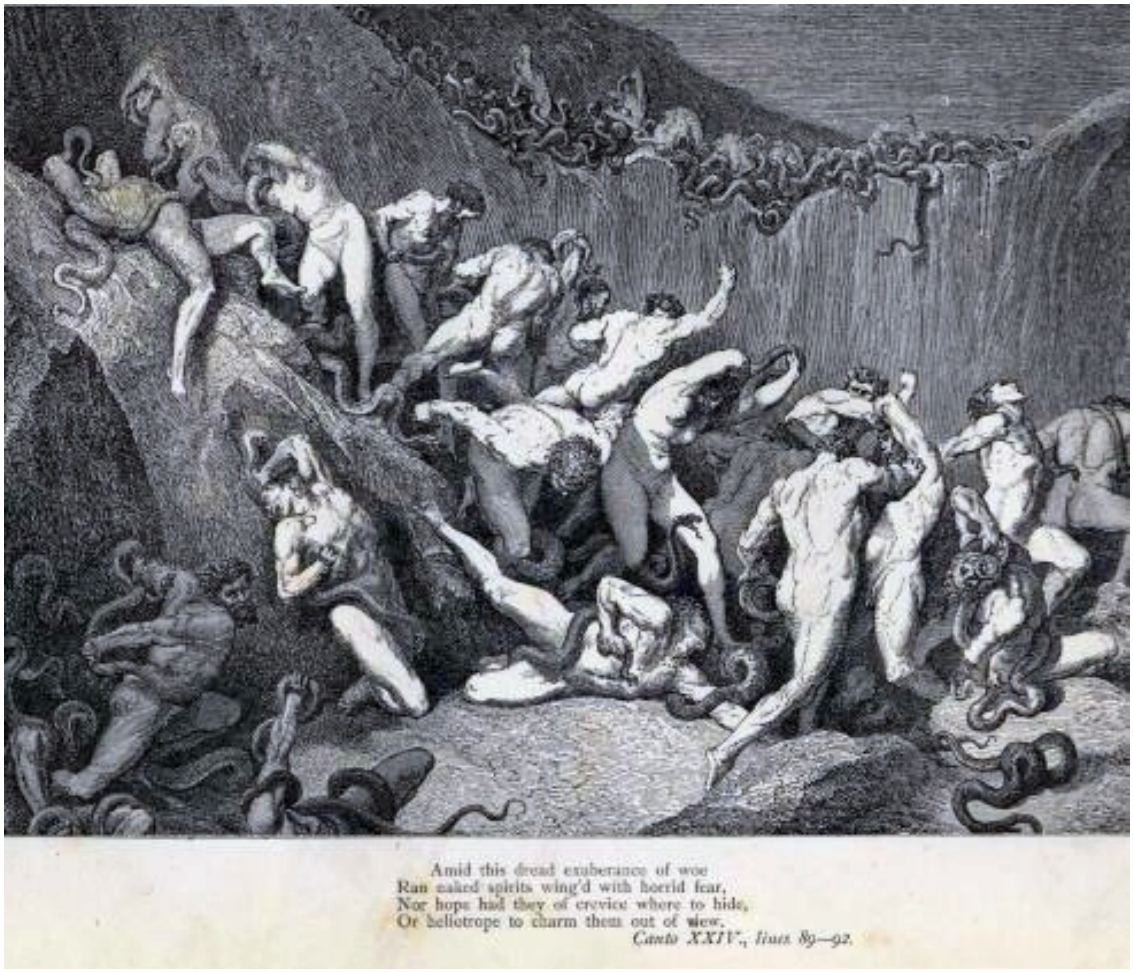
At length the point of our descent we reach'd
From the last flag: soon as to that arriv'd,
So was the breath exhausted from my lungs,
I could no further, but did seat me there.

"Now needs thy best of man;" so spake my guide:
"For not on downy plumes, nor under shade
Of canopy reposing, fame is won,
Without which whosoe'er consumes his days
Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth,
As smoke in air or foam upon the wave.
Thou therefore rise: vanish thy weariness
By the mind's effort, in each struggle form'd
To vanquish, if she suffer not the weight
Of her corporeal frame to crush her down.
A longer ladder yet remains to scale.
From these to have escap'd sufficeth not.
If well thou note me, profit by my words."

I straightway rose, and show'd myself less spent
Than I in truth did feel me. "On," I cried,
"For I am stout and fearless." Up the rock
Our way we held, more rugged than before,
Narrower and steeper far to climb. From talk
I ceas'd not, as we journey'd, so to seem
Least faint; whereat a voice from the other foss
Did issue forth, for utt'rance suited ill.
Though on the arch that crosses there I stood,
What were the words I knew not, but who spake
Seem'd mov'd in anger. Down I stoop'd to look,
But my quick eye might reach not to the depth
For shrouding darkness; wherefore thus I spake:

“To the next circle, Teacher, bend thy steps,
And from the wall dismount we; for as hence
I hear and understand not, so I see
Beneath, and naught discern.”— “I answer not,”
Said he, “but by the deed. To fair request
Silent performance maketh best return.”

We from the bridge’s head descended, where
To the eighth mound it joins, and then the chasm
Opening to view, I saw a crowd within
Of serpents terrible, so strange of shape
And hideous, that remembrance in my veins
Yet shrinks the vital current. Of her sands
Let Lybia vaunt no more: if Jaculus,
Pareas and Chelyder be her brood,
Cenchris and Amphisboena, plagues so dire
Or in such numbers swarming ne’er she shew’d,
Not with all Ethiopia, and whate’er
Above the Erythraean sea is spawn’d.



Amid this dread exuberance of woe
Ran naked spirits wing'd with horrid fear,
Nor hope had they of crevice where to hide,
Or heliotrope to charm them out of view.
With serpents were their hands behind them bound,
Which through their reins infix'd the tail and head
Twisted in folds before. And lo! on one
Near to our side, darted an adder up,
And, where the neck is on the shoulders tied,
Transpierc'd him. Far more quickly than e'er pen
Wrote O or I, he kindled, burn'd, and chang'd
To ashes, all pour'd out upon the earth.
When there dissolv'd he lay, the dust again
Uproll'd spontaneous, and the self-same form
Instant resumed. So mighty sages tell,
The' Arabian Phoenix, when five hundred years

Have well nigh circled, dies, and springs forthwith
Renascent. Blade nor herb throughout his life
He tastes, but tears of frankincense alone
And odorous amomum: swaths of nard
And myrrh his funeral shroud. As one that falls,
He knows not how, by force demoniac dragg'd
To earth, or through obstruction fettering up
In chains invisible the powers of man,
Who, risen from his trance, gazeth around,
Bewilder'd with the monstrous agony
He hath endur'd, and wildly staring sighs;
So stood aghast the sinner when he rose.

Oh! how severe God's judgment, that deals out
Such blows in stormy vengeance! Who he was
My teacher next inquir'd, and thus in few
He answer'd: "Vanni Fucci am I call'd,
Not long since rained down from Tuscany
To this dire gullet. Me the beastial life
And not the human pleas'd, mule that I was,
Who in Pistoia found my worthy den."

I then to Virgil: "Bid him stir not hence,
And ask what crime did thrust him hither: once
A man I knew him choleric and bloody."

The sinner heard and feign'd not, but towards me
His mind directing and his face, wherein
Was dismal shame depictur'd, thus he spake:
"It grieves me more to have been caught by thee
In this sad plight, which thou beholdest, than
When I was taken from the other life.
I have no power permitted to deny
What thou inquirest." I am doom'd thus low
To dwell, for that the sacristy by me
Was rifled of its goodly ornaments,
And with the guilt another falsely charged.
But that thou mayst not joy to see me thus,
So as thou e'er shalt 'scape this darksome realm

Open thine ears and hear what I forebode.
Reft of the Neri first Pistoia pines,
Then Florence changeth citizens and laws.
From Valdimagra, drawn by wrathful Mars,
A vapour rises, wrapt in turbid mists,
And sharp and eager driveth on the storm
With arrowy hurtling o’er Piceno’s field,
Whence suddenly the cloud shall burst, and strike
Each helpless Bianco prostrate to the ground.
This have I told, that grief may rend thy heart.”

CANTO XXV

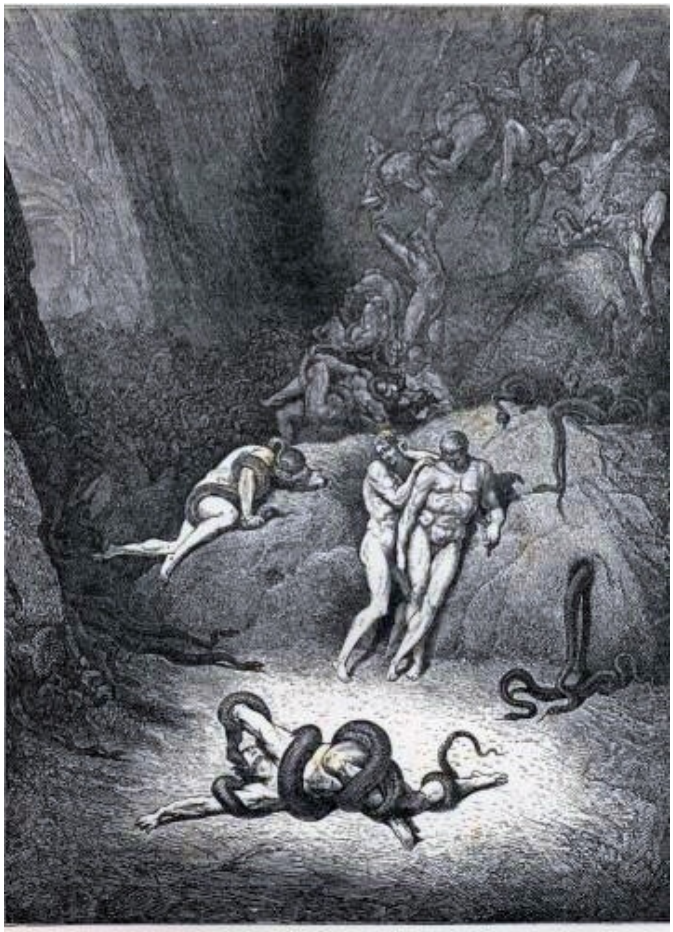
Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

WHEN he had spoke, the sinner rais'd his hands
Pointed in mockery, and cried: "Take them, God!
I level them at thee!" From that day forth
The serpents were my friends; for round his neck
One of then rolling twisted, as it said,
"Be silent, tongue!" Another to his arms
Upgliding, tied them, riveting itself
So close, it took from them the power to move.

Pistoia! Ah Pistoia! why dost doubt
To turn thee into ashes, cumb'ring earth
No longer, since in evil act so far
Thou hast outdone thy seed? I did not mark,
Through all the gloomy circles of the' abyss,
Spirit, that swell'd so proudly 'gainst his God,
Not him, who headlong fell from Thebes. He fled,
Nor utter'd more; and after him there came
A centaur full of fury, shouting, "Where
Where is the caitiff?" On Maremma's marsh
Swarm not the serpent tribe, as on his haunch
They swarm'd, to where the human face begins.
Behind his head upon the shoulders lay,
With open wings, a dragon breathing fire
On whomsoe'er he met. To me my guide:
"Cacus is this, who underneath the rock
Of Aventine spread oft a lake of blood.
He, from his brethren parted, here must tread
A different journey, for his fraudful theft
Of the great herd, that near him stall'd; whence found
His felon deeds their end, beneath the mace
Of stout Alcides, that perchance laid on
A hundred blows, and not the tenth was felt."

While yet he spake, the centaur sped away:
And under us three spirits came, of whom

Nor I nor he was ware, till they exclaim'd;
"Say who are ye?" We then brake off discourse,
Intent on these alone. I knew them not;
But, as it chanceth oft, befell, that one
Had need to name another. "Where," said he,
"Doth Cianfa lurk?" I, for a sign my guide
Should stand attentive, plac'd against my lips
The finger lifted. If, O reader! now
Thou be not apt to credit what I tell,
No marvel; for myself do scarce allow
The witness of mine eyes. But as I looked
Toward them, lo! a serpent with six feet
Springs forth on one, and fastens full upon him:
His midmost grasp'd the belly, a forefoot
Seiz'd on each arm (while deep in either cheek
He flesh'd his fangs); the hinder on the thighs
Were spread, 'twixt which the tail inserted curl'd
Upon the reins behind. Ivy ne'er clasp'd
A dodder'd oak, as round the other's limbs
The hideous monster intertwin'd his own.
Then, as they both had been of burning wax,
Each melted into other, mingling hues,
That which was either now was seen no more.
Thus up the shrinking paper, ere it burns,
A brown tint glides, not turning yet to black,
And the clean white expires. The other two
Look'd on exclaiming: "Ah, how dost thou change,
Agnello! See! Thou art nor double now,



The other two
Look'd on, exclaiming, "Ah! how dost thou change,
Agnello!"
Canto XXV., lines 59—61.

"Nor only one." The two heads now became
One, and two figures blended in one form
Appear'd, where both were lost. Of the four lengths
Two arms were made: the belly and the chest
The thighs and legs into such members chang'd,
As never eye hath seen. Of former shape
All trace was vanish'd. Two yet neither seem'd
That image miscreate, and so pass'd on
With tardy steps. As underneath the scourge
Of the fierce dog-star, that lays bare the fields,
Shifting from brake to brake, the lizard seems
A flash of lightning, if he thwart the road,
So toward th' entrails of the other two
Approaching seem'd, an adder all on fire,
As the dark pepper-grain, livid and swart.

In that part, whence our life is nourish'd first,
One he transpierc'd; then down before him fell
Stretch'd out. The pierced spirit look'd on him
But spake not; yea stood motionless and yawn'd,
As if by sleep or fev'rous fit assail'd.
He ey'd the serpent, and the serpent him.
One from the wound, the other from the mouth
Breath'd a thick smoke, whose vap'ry columns join'd.

Lucan in mute attention now may hear,
Nor thy disastrous fate, Sabellus! tell,
Nor shine, Nasidius! Ovid now be mute.
What if in warbling fiction he record
Cadmus and Arethusa, to a snake
Him chang'd, and her into a fountain clear,
I envy not; for never face to face
Two natures thus transmuted did he sing,
Wherein both shapes were ready to assume
The other's substance. They in mutual guise
So answer'd, that the serpent split his train
Divided to a fork, and the pierc'd spirit
Drew close his steps together, legs and thighs
Compacted, that no sign of juncture soon
Was visible: the tail disparted took
The figure which the spirit lost, its skin
Soft'ning, his indurated to a rind.
The shoulders next I mark'd, that ent'ring join'd
The monster's arm-pits, whose two shorter feet
So lengthen'd, as the other's dwindling shrunk.
The feet behind then twisting up became
That part that man conceals, which in the wretch
Was cleft in twain. While both the shadowy smoke
With a new colour veils, and generates
Th' excrescent pile on one, peeling it off
From th' other body, lo! upon his feet
One upright rose, and prone the other fell.
Not yet their glaring and malignant lamps
Were shifted, though each feature chang'd beneath.
Of him who stood erect, the mounting face

Retreated towards the temples, and what there
Superfluous matter came, shot out in ears
From the smooth cheeks, the rest, not backward dragg'd,
Of its excess did shape the nose; and swell'd
Into due size protuberant the lips.
He, on the earth who lay, meanwhile extends
His sharpen'd visage, and draws down the ears
Into the head, as doth the slug his horns.
His tongue continuous before and apt
For utt'rance, severs; and the other's fork
Closing unites. That done the smoke was laid.
The soul, transform'd into the brute, glides off,
Hissing along the vale, and after him
The other talking sputters; but soon turn'd
His new-grown shoulders on him, and in few
Thus to another spake: "Along this path
Crawling, as I have done, speed Buoso now!"

So saw I fluctuate in successive change
Th' unsteady ballast of the seventh hold:
And here if aught my tongue have swerv'd, events
So strange may be its warrant. O'er mine eyes
Confusion hung, and on my thoughts amaze.

Yet 'scap'd they not so covertly, but well
I mark'd Sciancato: he alone it was
Of the three first that came, who chang'd not: thou,
The other's fate, Gaville, still dost rue.

CANTO XXVI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

FLORENCE exult! for thou so mightily
Hast thriven, that o'er land and sea thy wings
Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over hell!
Among the plund'rers such the three I found
Thy citizens, whence shame to me thy son,
And no proud honour to thyself redounds.

But if our minds, when dreaming near the dawn,
Are of the truth presageful, thou ere long
Shalt feel what Prato, (not to say the rest)
Would fain might come upon thee; and that chance
Were in good time, if it befell thee now.
Would so it were, since it must needs befall!
For as time wears me, I shall grieve the more.

We from the depth departed; and my guide
Remounting scal'd the flinty steps, which late
We downward trac'd, and drew me up the steep.
Pursuing thus our solitary way
Among the crags and splinters of the rock,
Sped not our feet without the help of hands.

Then sorrow seiz'd me, which e'en now revives,
As my thought turns again to what I saw,
And, more than I am wont, I rein and curb
The powers of nature in me, lest they run
Where Virtue guides not; that if aught of good
My gentle star, or something better gave me,
I envy not myself the precious boon.

As in that season, when the sun least veils
His face that lightens all, what time the fly
Gives way to the shrill gnat, the peasant then
Upon some cliff reclin'd, beneath him sees
Fire-flies innumerous spangling o'er the vale,

Vineyard or tilth, where his day-labour lies:
With flames so numberless throughout its space
Shone the eighth chasm, apparent, when the depth
Was to my view expos'd. As he, whose wrongs
The bears aveng'd, at its departure saw
Elijah's chariot, when the steeds erect
Rais'd their steep flight for heav'n; his eyes meanwhile,
Straining pursu'd them, till the flame alone
Upsoaring like a misty speck he kenn'd;
E'en thus along the gulf moves every flame,
A sinner so enfolded close in each,
That none exhibits token of the theft.

Upon the bridge I forward bent to look,
And grasp'd a flinty mass, or else had fall'n,
Though push'd not from the height. The guide, who mark'd
How I did gaze attentive, thus began:

The guide, who mark'd
How I did gaze attentive, thus began:
"Within these ardours are the spirits, each
Swathed in confining fire."
Canto XXVI., lines 46—49.

"Within these ardours are the spirits, each
Swath'd in confining fire."— "Master, thy word,"
I answer'd, "hath assur'd me; yet I deem'd
Already of the truth, already wish'd
To ask thee, who is in yon fire, that comes
So parted at the summit, as it seem'd
Ascending from that funeral pile, where lay
The Theban brothers?" He replied: "Within
Ulysses there and Diomede endure
Their penal tortures, thus to vengeance now
Together hasting, as erewhile to wrath.
These in the flame with ceaseless groans deplore
The ambush of the horse, that open'd wide
A portal for that goodly seed to pass,
Which sow'd imperial Rome; nor less the guile

Lament they, whence of her Achilles ‘reft
Deidamia yet in death complains.
And there is rued the stratagem, that Troy
Of her Palladium spoil’d.”— “If they have power
Of utt’rance from within these sparks,” said I,
“O master! think my prayer a thousand fold
In repetition urg’d, that thou vouchsafe
To pause, till here the horned flame arrive.
See, how toward it with desire I bend.”

He thus: “Thy prayer is worthy of much praise,
And I accept it therefore: but do thou
Thy tongue refrain: to question them be mine,
For I divine thy wish: and they perchance,
For they were Greeks, might shun discourse with thee.”

When there the flame had come, where time and place
Seem’d fitting to my guide, he thus began:
“O ye, who dwell two spirits in one fire!
If living I of you did merit aught,
Whate’er the measure were of that desert,
When in the world my lofty strain I pour’d,
Move ye not on, till one of you unfold
In what clime death o’ertook him self-destroy’d.”

Of the old flame forthwith the greater horn
Began to roll, murmuring, as a fire
That labours with the wind, then to and fro
Wagging the top, as a tongue uttering sounds,
Threw out its voice, and spake: “When I escap’d
From Circe, who beyond a circling year
Had held me near Caieta, by her charms,
Ere thus Aeneas yet had nam’d the shore,
Nor fondness for my son, nor reverence
Of my old father, nor return of love,
That should have crown’d Penelope with joy,
Could overcome in me the zeal I had
T’ explore the world, and search the ways of life,
Man’s evil and his virtue. Forth I sail’d

Into the deep illimitable main,
With but one bark, and the small faithful band
That yet cleav'd to me. As Iberia far,
Far as Morocco either shore I saw,
And the Sardinian and each isle beside
Which round that ocean bathes. Tardy with age
Were I and my companions, when we came
To the strait pass, where Hercules ordain'd
The bound'ries not to be o'erstepp'd by man.
The walls of Seville to my right I left,
On the' other hand already Ceuta past.
"O brothers!" I began, "who to the west
Through perils without number now have reach'd,
To this the short remaining watch, that yet
Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof
Of the unpeopled world, following the track
Of Phoebus. Call to mind from whence we sprang:
Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes
But virtue to pursue and knowledge high."
With these few words I sharpen'd for the voyage
The mind of my associates, that I then
Could scarcely have withheld them. To the dawn
Our poop we turn'd, and for the witless flight
Made our oars wings, still gaining on the left.
Each star of the' other pole night now beheld,
And ours so low, that from the ocean-floor
It rose not. Five times re-illum'd, as oft
Vanish'd the light from underneath the moon
Since the deep way we enter'd, when from far
Appear'd a mountain dim, loftiest methought
Of all I e'er beheld. Joy seiz'd us straight,
But soon to mourning changed. From the new land
A whirlwind sprung, and at her foremost side
Did strike the vessel. Thrice it whirl'd her round
With all the waves, the fourth time lifted up
The poop, and sank the prow: so fate decreed:
And over us the booming billow clos'd."

CANTO XVII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

NOW upward rose the flame, and still'd its light
To speak no more, and now pass'd on with leave
From the mild poet gain'd, when following came
Another, from whose top a sound confus'd,
Forth issuing, drew our eyes that way to look.

As the Sicilian bull, that rightfully
His cries first echoed, who had shap'd its mould,
Did so rebellow, with the voice of him
Tormented, that the brazen monster seem'd
Pierc'd through with pain; thus while no way they found
Nor avenue immediate through the flame,
Into its language turn'd the dismal words:
But soon as they had won their passage forth,
Up from the point, which vibrating obey'd
Their motion at the tongue, these sounds we heard:
"O thou! to whom I now direct my voice!
That lately didst exclaim in Lombard phrase,

'Depart thou, I solicit thee no more,'
Though somewhat tardy I perchance arrive
Let it not irk thee here to pause awhile,
And with me parley: lo! it irks not me
And yet I burn. If but e'en now thou fall
into this blind world, from that pleasant land
Of Latium, whence I draw my sum of guilt,
Tell me if those, who in Romagna dwell,
Have peace or war. For of the mountains there
Was I, betwixt Urbino and the height,
Whence Tyber first unlocks his mighty flood."

Leaning I listen'd yet with heedful ear,
When, as he touch'd my side, the leader thus:
"Speak thou: he is a Latian." My reply
Was ready, and I spake without delay:

“O spirit! who art hidden here below!
Never was thy Romagna without war
In her proud tyrants’ bosoms, nor is now:
But open war there left I none. The state,
Ravenna hath maintain’d this many a year,
Is steadfast. There Polenta’s eagle broods,
And in his broad circumference of plume
O’ershadows Cervia. The green talons grasp
The land, that stood erewhile the proof so long,
And pil’d in bloody heap the host of France.

“The’ old mastiff of Verruchio and the young,
That tore Montagna in their wrath, still make,
Where they are wont, an augre of their fangs.

“Lamone’s city and Santerno’s range
Under the lion of the snowy lair.
Inconstant partisan! that changeth sides,
Or ever summer yields to winter’s frost.
And she, whose flank is wash’d of Savio’s wave,
As ‘twixt the level and the steep she lies,
Lives so ‘twixt tyrant power and liberty.

“Now tell us, I entreat thee, who art thou?
Be not more hard than others. In the world,
So may thy name still rear its forehead high.”

Then roar’d awhile the fire, its sharpen’d point
On either side wav’d, and thus breath’d at last:
“If I did think, my answer were to one,
Who ever could return unto the world,
This flame should rest unshaken. But since ne’er,
If true be told me, any from this depth
Has found his upward way, I answer thee,
Nor fear lest infamy record the words.

“A man of arms at first, I cloth’d me then
In good Saint Francis’ girdle, hoping so
T’ have made amends. And certainly my hope

Had fail'd not, but that he, whom curses light on,
The' high priest again seduc'd me into sin.
And how and wherefore listen while I tell.
Long as this spirit mov'd the bones and pulp
My mother gave me, less my deeds bespake
The nature of the lion than the fox.
All ways of winding subtlety I knew,
And with such art conducted, that the sound
Reach'd the world's limit. Soon as to that part
Of life I found me come, when each behoves
To lower sails and gather in the lines;
That which before had pleased me then I rued,
And to repentance and confession turn'd;
Wretch that I was! and well it had bested me!
The chief of the new Pharisees meantime,
Waging his warfare near the Lateran,
Not with the Saracens or Jews (his foes
All Christians were, nor against Acre one
Had fought, nor traffic'd in the Soldan's land),
He his great charge nor sacred ministry
In himself, rev'renc'd, nor in me that cord,
Which us'd to mark with leanness whom it girded.
As in Socrate, Constantine besought
To cure his leprosy Sylvester's aid,
So me to cure the fever of his pride
This man besought: my counsel to that end
He ask'd: and I was silent: for his words
Seem'd drunken: but forthwith he thus resum'd:
"From thy heart banish fear: of all offence
I hitherto absolve thee. In return,
Teach me my purpose so to execute,
That Penestrino cumber earth no more.
Heav'n, as thou knowest, I have power to shut
And open: and the keys are therefore twain,
The which my predecessor meanly priz'd."

Then, yielding to the forceful arguments,
Of silence as more perilous I deem'd,
And answer'd: "Father! since thou washest me

Clear of that guilt wherein I now must fall,
Large promise with performance scant, be sure,
Shall make thee triumph in thy lofty seat."

"When I was number'd with the dead, then came
Saint Francis for me; but a cherub dark
He met, who cried: "'Wrong me not; he is mine,
And must below to join the wretched crew,
For the deceitful counsel which he gave.
E'er since I watch'd him, hov'ring at his hair,
No power can the impenitent absolve;
Nor to repent and will at once consist,
By contradiction absolute forbid."
Oh mis'ry! how I shook myself, when he
Seiz'd me, and cried, "Thou haply thought'st me not
A disputant in logic so exact."
To Minos down he bore me, and the judge
Twin'd eight times round his callous back the tail,
Which biting with excess of rage, he spake:
'This is a guilty soul, that in the fire
Must vanish.' Hence perdition-doom'd I rove
A prey to rankling sorrow in this garb."

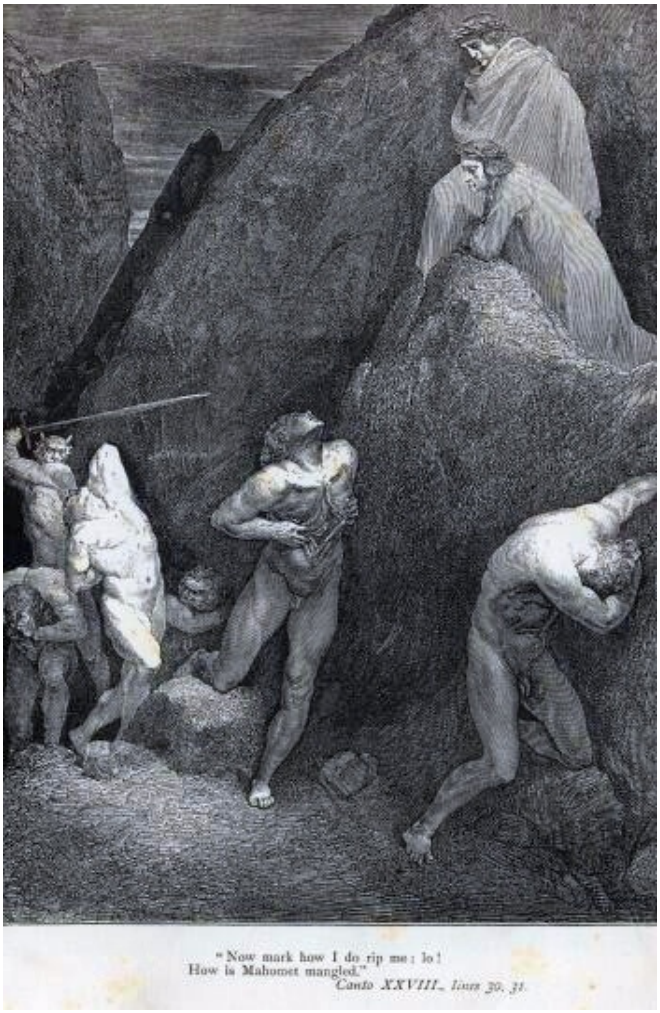
When he had thus fulfill'd his words, the flame
In dolour parted, beating to and fro,
And writhing its sharp horn. We onward went,
I and my leader, up along the rock,
Far as another arch, that overhangs
The foss, wherein the penalty is paid
Of those, who load them with committed sin.

CANTO XXVIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

WHO, e'en in words unfetter'd, might at full
Tell of the wounds and blood that now I saw,
Though he repeated oft the tale? No tongue
So vast a theme could equal, speech and thought
Both impotent alike. If in one band
Collected, stood the people all, who e'er
Pour'd on Apulia's happy soil their blood,
Slain by the Trojans, and in that long war
When of the rings the measur'd booty made
A pile so high, as Rome's historian writes
Who errs not, with the multitude, that felt
The grinding force of Guiscard's Norman steel,
And those the rest, whose bones are gather'd yet
At Ceperano, there where treachery
Branded th' Apulian name, or where beyond
Thy walls, O Tagliacozzo, without arms
The old Alardo conquer'd; and his limbs
One were to show transpierc'd, another his
Clean lopt away; a spectacle like this
Were but a thing of nought, to the' hideous sight
Of the ninth chasm. A rundlet, that hath lost
Its middle or side stave, gapes not so wide,
As one I mark'd, torn from the chin throughout
Down to the hinder passage: 'twixt the legs
Dangling his entrails hung, the midriff lay
Open to view, and wretched ventricle,
That turns th' englutted aliment to dross.

Whilst eagerly I fix on him my gaze,
He ey'd me, with his hands laid his breast bare,
And cried; "Now mark how I do rip me! lo!

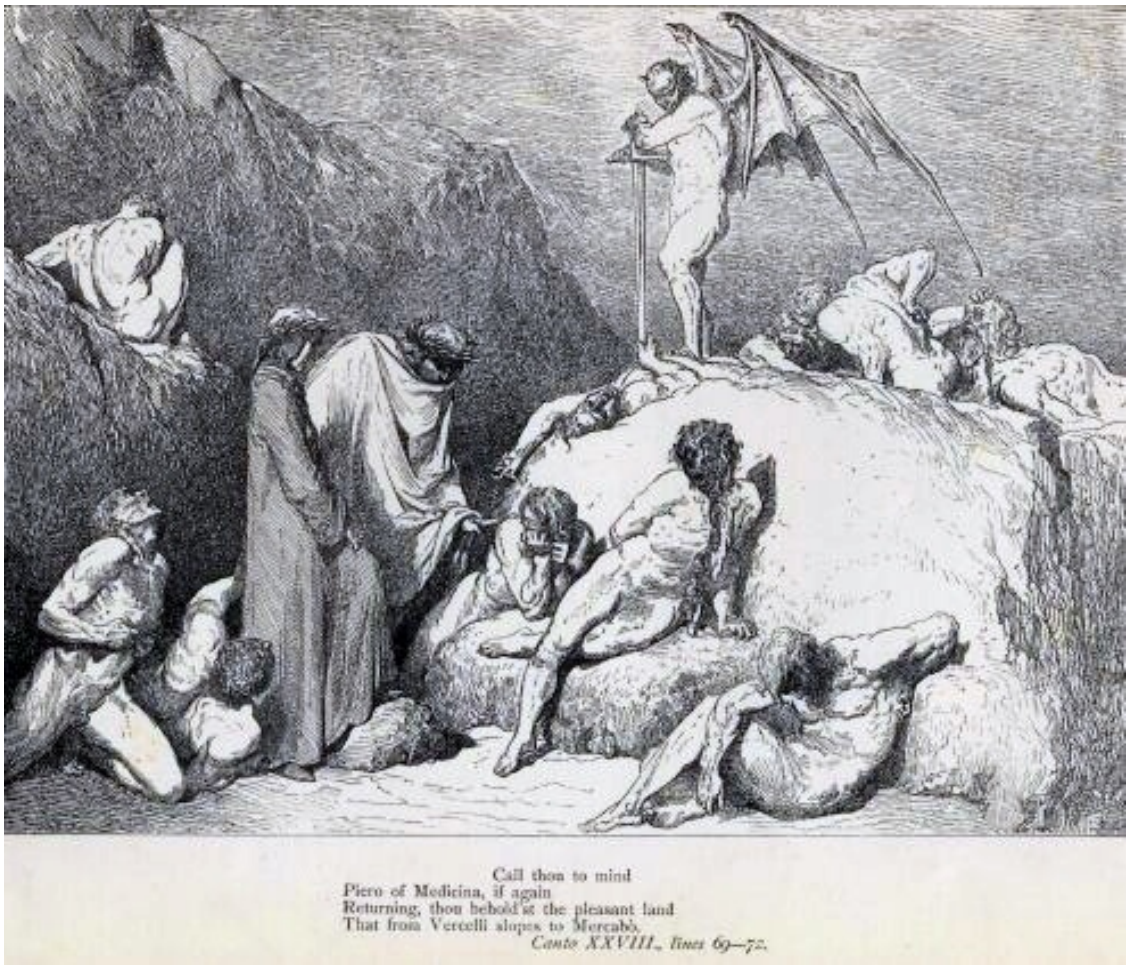


"Now mark how I do rip me; lo!
How is Mahomet mangled."
Canto XXVIII., lines 30, 31.

"How is Mohammed mangled! before me
Walks Ali weeping, from the chin his face
Cleft to the forelock; and the others all
Whom here thou seest, while they liv'd, did sow
Scandal and schism, and therefore thus are rent.
A fiend is here behind, who with his sword
Hacks us thus cruelly, slivering again
Each of this ream, when we have compast round
The dismal way, for first our gashes close
Ere we repass before him. But say who
Art thou, that standest musing on the rock,
Haply so lingering to delay the pain
Sentenc'd upon thy crimes?"— "Him death not yet,"
My guide rejoin'd, "hath overta'en, nor sin
Conducts to torment; but, that he may make

Full trial of your state, I who am dead
Must through the depths of hell, from orb to orb,
Conduct him. Trust my words, for they are true."

More than a hundred spirits, when that they heard,
Stood in the foss to mark me, through amazed,
Forgetful of their pangs. "Thou, who perchance
Shalt shortly view the sun, this warning thou
Bear to Dolcino: bid him, if he wish not
Here soon to follow me, that with good store
Of food he arm him, lest impris'ning snows
Yield him a victim to Novara's power,
No easy conquest else." With foot uprais'd
For stepping, spake Mohammed, on the ground
Then fix'd it to depart. Another shade,
Pierc'd in the throat, his nostrils mutilate
E'en from beneath the eyebrows, and one ear
Lopt off, who with the rest through wonder stood
Gazing, before the rest advanc'd, and bar'd
His wind-pipe, that without was all o'ersmear'd
With crimson stain. "O thou!" said 'he, "whom sin
Condemns not, and whom erst (unless too near
Resemblance do deceive me) I aloft
Have seen on Latian ground, call thou to mind
Piero of Medicina, if again
Returning, thou behold'st the pleasant land
That from Vercelli slopes to Mercabo;



Call thou to mind
Piero of Medicina, if again
Returning, thou behold'st the pleasant land
That from Vercelli slopes to Mercabò.
Canto XXVIII., lines 69—72.

"And there instruct the twain, whom Fano boasts
Her worthiest sons, Guido and Angelo,
That if 't is giv'n us here to scan aright
The future, they out of life's tenement
Shall be cast forth, and whelm'd under the waves
Near to Cattolica, through perfidy
Of a fell tyrant. 'Twixt the Cyprian isle
And Balearic, ne'er hath Neptune seen
An injury so foul, by pirates done
Or Argive crew of old. That one-ey'd traitor
(Whose realm there is a spirit here were fain
His eye had still lack'd sight of) them shall bring
To conf'rence with him, then so shape his end,
That they shall need not 'gainst Focara's wind
Offer up vow nor pray'r." I answering thus:

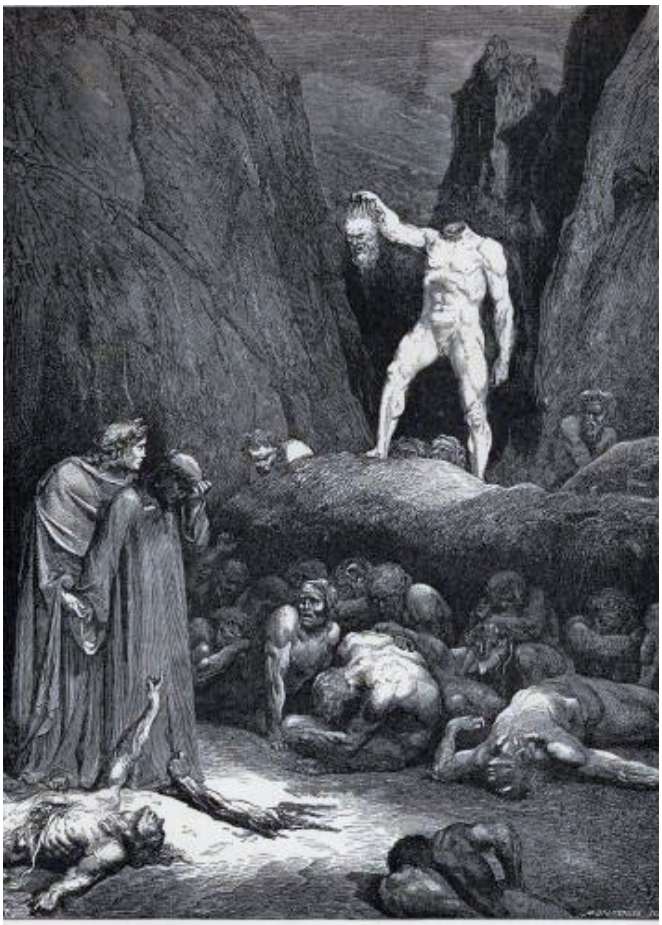
"Declare, as thou dost wish that I above

"Declare, as thou dost wish that I above
May carry tidings of thee, who is he,
In whom that sight doth wake such sad remembrance?"

Forthwith he laid his hand on the cheek-bone
Of one, his fellow-spirit, and his jaws
Expanding, cried: "Lo! this is he I wot of;
He speaks not for himself: the outcast this
Who overwhelm'd the doubt in Caesar's mind,
Affirming that delay to men prepar'd
Was ever harmful. "Oh how terrified
Methought was Curio, from whose throat was cut
The tongue, which spake that hardy word. Then one
Maim'd of each hand, uplifted in the gloom
The bleeding stumps, that they with gory spots
Sullied his face, and cried: 'Remember thee
Of Mosca, too, I who, alas! exclaim'd,
"The deed once done there is an end," that prov'd
A seed of sorrow to the Tuscan race."

I added: "Ay, and death to thine own tribe."

Whence heaping woe on woe he hurried off,
As one grief stung to madness. But I there
Still linger'd to behold the troop, and saw
Things, such as I may fear without more proof
To tell of, but that conscience makes me firm,
The boon companion, who her strong breast-plate
Buckles on him, that feels no guilt within
And bids him on and fear not. Without doubt
I saw, and yet it seems to pass before me,
A headless trunk, that even as the rest
Of the sad flock pac'd onward. By the hair
It bore the sever'd member, lantern-wise
Pendent in hand, which look'd at us and said,



By the hair
It bore the sever'd member, lantern-wise
Pendent in hand, which look'd at us, and said,
"Woe's me!" *Canto XXVIII., lines 116—119.*

"Woe's me!" The spirit lighted thus himself,
And two there were in one, and one in two.
How that may be he knows who ordereth so.

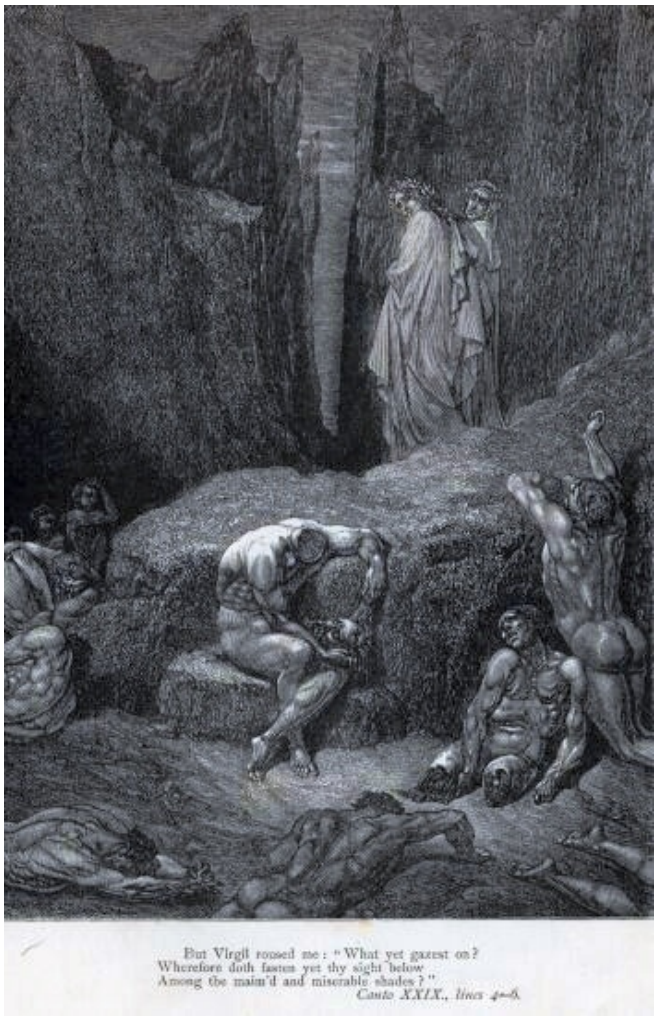
When at the bridge's foot direct he stood,
His arm aloft he rear'd, thrusting the head
Full in our view, that nearer we might hear
The words, which thus it utter'd: "Now behold
This grievous torment, thou, who breathing go'st
To spy the dead; behold if any else
Be terrible as this. And that on earth
Thou mayst bear tidings of me, know that I
Am Bertrand, he of Born, who gave King John
The counsel mischievous. Father and son
I set at mutual war. For Absalom

And David more did not Ahitophel,
Spurring them on maliciously to strife.
For parting those so closely knit, my brain
Parted, alas! I carry from its source,
That in this trunk inhabits. Thus the law
Of retribution fiercely works in me.”

CANTO XXIX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

SO were mine eyes inebriate with view
Of the vast multitude, whom various wounds
Disfigur'd, that they long'd to stay and weep.



But Virgil rous'd me: "What yet gazest on?
Wherefore doth fasten yet thy sight below
Among the maim'd and miserable shades?
Thou hast not shewn in any chasm beside
This weakness. Know, if thou wouldst number them
That two and twenty miles the valley winds
Its circuit, and already is the moon

Beneath our feet: the time permitted now
Is short, and more not seen remains to see."

"If thou," I straight replied, "hadst weigh'd the cause
For which I look'd, thou hadst perchance excus'd
The tarrying still." My leader part pursu'd
His way, the while I follow'd, answering him,
And adding thus: "Within that cave I deem,
Whereon so fixedly I held my ken,
There is a spirit dwells, one of my blood,
Wailing the crime that costs him now so dear."

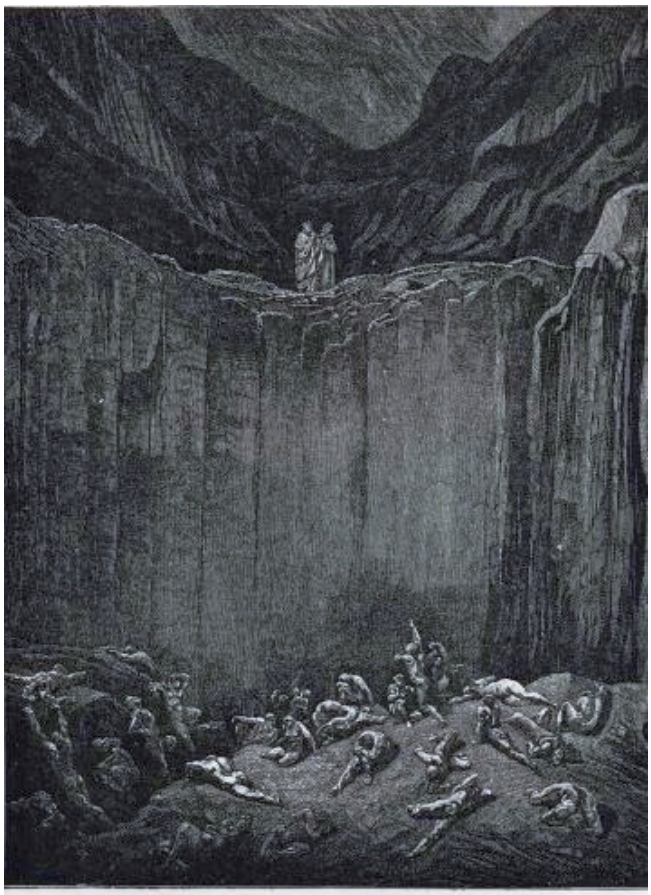
Then spake my master: "Let thy soul no more
Afflict itself for him. Direct elsewhere
Its thought, and leave him. At the bridge's foot
I mark'd how he did point with menacing look
At thee, and heard him by the others nam'd
Geri of Bello. Thou so wholly then
Wert busied with his spirit, who once rul'd
The towers of Hautefort, that thou lookedst not
That way, ere he was gone."— "O guide belov'd!
His violent death yet unaveng'd," said I,
"By any, who are partners in his shame,
Made him contemptuous: therefore, as I think,
He pass'd me speechless by; and doing so
Hath made me more compassionate his fate."

So we discours'd to where the rock first show'd
The other valley, had more light been there,
E'en to the lowest depth. Soon as we came
O'er the last cloister in the dismal rounds
Of Malebolge, and the brotherhood
Were to our view expos'd, then many a dart
Of sore lament assail'd me, headed all
With points of thrilling pity, that I clos'd
Both ears against the volley with mine hands.

As were the torment, if each lazar-house
Of Valdichiana, in the sultry time
'Twixt July and September, with the isle

'Twixt July and September, with the isle
Sardinia and Maremma's pestilent fen,
Had heap'd their maladies all in one foss
Together; such was here the torment: dire
The stench, as issuing steams from fester'd limbs.

We on the utmost shore of the long rock
Descended still to leftward. Then my sight
Was livelier to explore the depth, wherein
The minister of the most mighty Lord,
All-searching Justice, dooms to punishment
The forgers noted on her dread record.

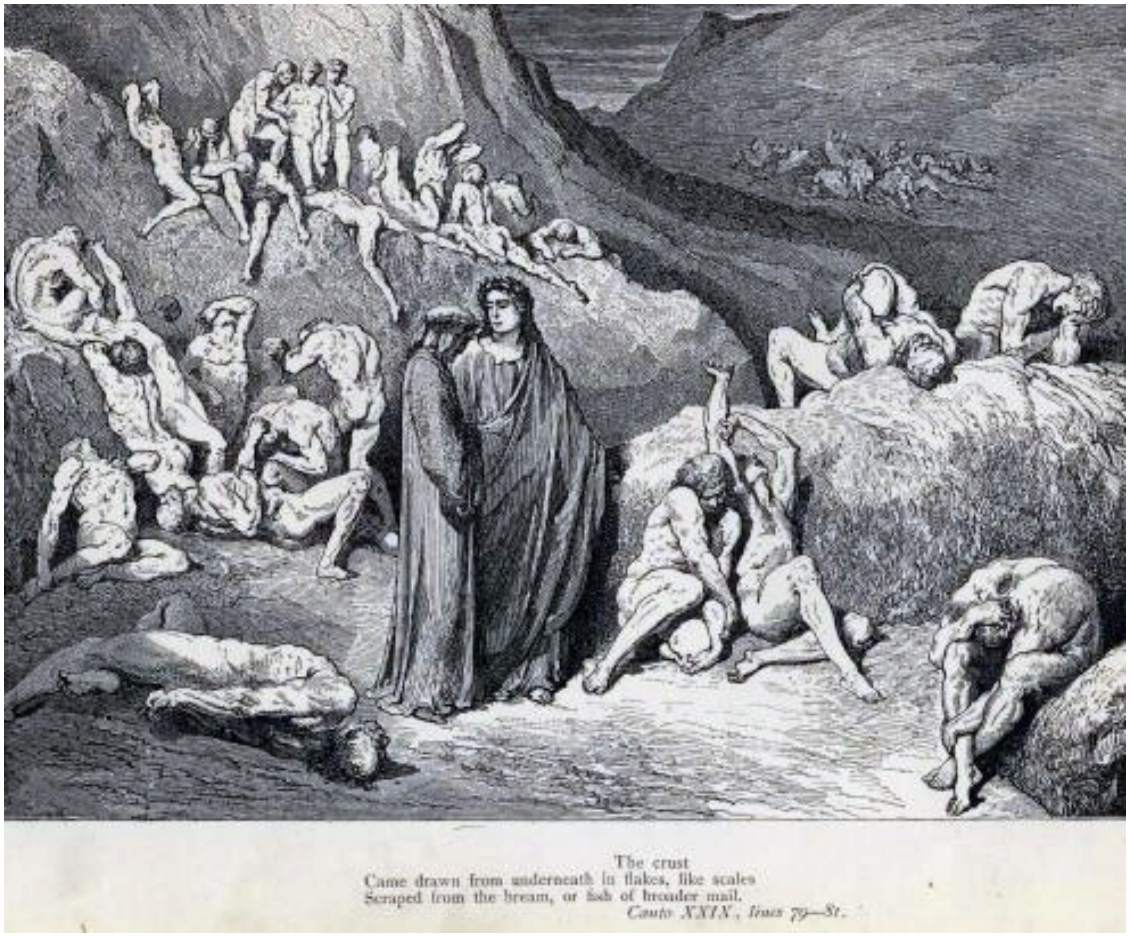


Then my sight
Was livelier to explore the depth, wherein
The minister of the most mighty Lord,
All-searching Justice, dooms to punishment
The forgers noted on her dread record.
Canto XXIX., lines 52—56.

S

More rueful was it not methinks to see
The nation in Aegina droop, what time
Each living thing, e'en to the little worm,

All fell, so full of malice was the air
(And afterward, as bards of yore have told,
The ancient people were restor'd anew
From seed of emmets) than was here to see
The spirits, that languish'd through the murky vale
Up-pil'd on many a stack. Confus'd they lay,
One o'er the belly, o'er the shoulders one
Roll'd of another; sideling crawl'd a third
Along the dismal pathway. Step by step
We journey'd on, in silence looking round
And list'ning those diseas'd, who strove in vain
To lift their forms. Then two I mark'd, that sat
Propp'd 'gainst each other, as two brazen pans
Set to retain the heat. From head to foot,
A tetter bark'd them round. Nor saw I e'er
Groom currying so fast, for whom his lord
Impatient waited, or himself perchance
Tir'd with long watching, as of these each one
Plied quickly his keen nails, through furiousness
Of ne'er abated pruriency. The crust
Came drawn from underneath in flakes, like scales
Scrap'd from the bream or fish of broader mail.



The crust
Came drawn from underneath in flakes, like scales
Scraped from the bream, or fish of broader mail.
Canto XXIX., lines 79—81.

“O thou, who with thy fingers rendest off
Thy coat of proof,” thus spake my guide to one,
“And sometimes makest tearing pincers of them,
Tell me if any born of Latian land
Be among these within: so may thy nails
Serve thee for everlasting to this toil.”

“Both are of Latium,” weeping he replied,
“Whom tortur’d thus thou seest: but who art thou
That hast inquir’d of us?” To whom my guide:
“One that descend with this man, who yet lives,
From rock to rock, and show him hell’s abyss.”

Then started they asunder, and each turn’d
Trembling toward us, with the rest, whose ear
Those words redounding struck. To me my liege
Address’d him: “Speak to them whate’er thou list.”

And I therewith began: “So may no time
Filch your remembrance from the thoughts of men
In th’ upper world, but after many suns
Survive it, as ye tell me, who ye are,
And of what race ye come. Your punishment,
Unseemly and disgustful in its kind,
Deter you not from opening thus much to me.”

“Arezzo was my dwelling,” answer’d one,
“And me Albero of Sienna brought
To die by fire; but that, for which I died,
Leads me not here. True is in sport I told him,
That I had learn’d to wing my flight in air.
And he admiring much, as he was void
Of wisdom, will’d me to declare to him
The secret of mine art: and only hence,
Because I made him not a Daedalus,
Prevail’d on one suppos’d his sire to burn me.
But Minos to this chasm last of the ten,
For that I practis’d alchemy on earth,
Has doom’d me. Him no subterfuge eludes.”

Then to the bard I spake: “Was ever race
Light as Sienna’s? Sure not France herself
Can show a tribe so frivolous and vain.”

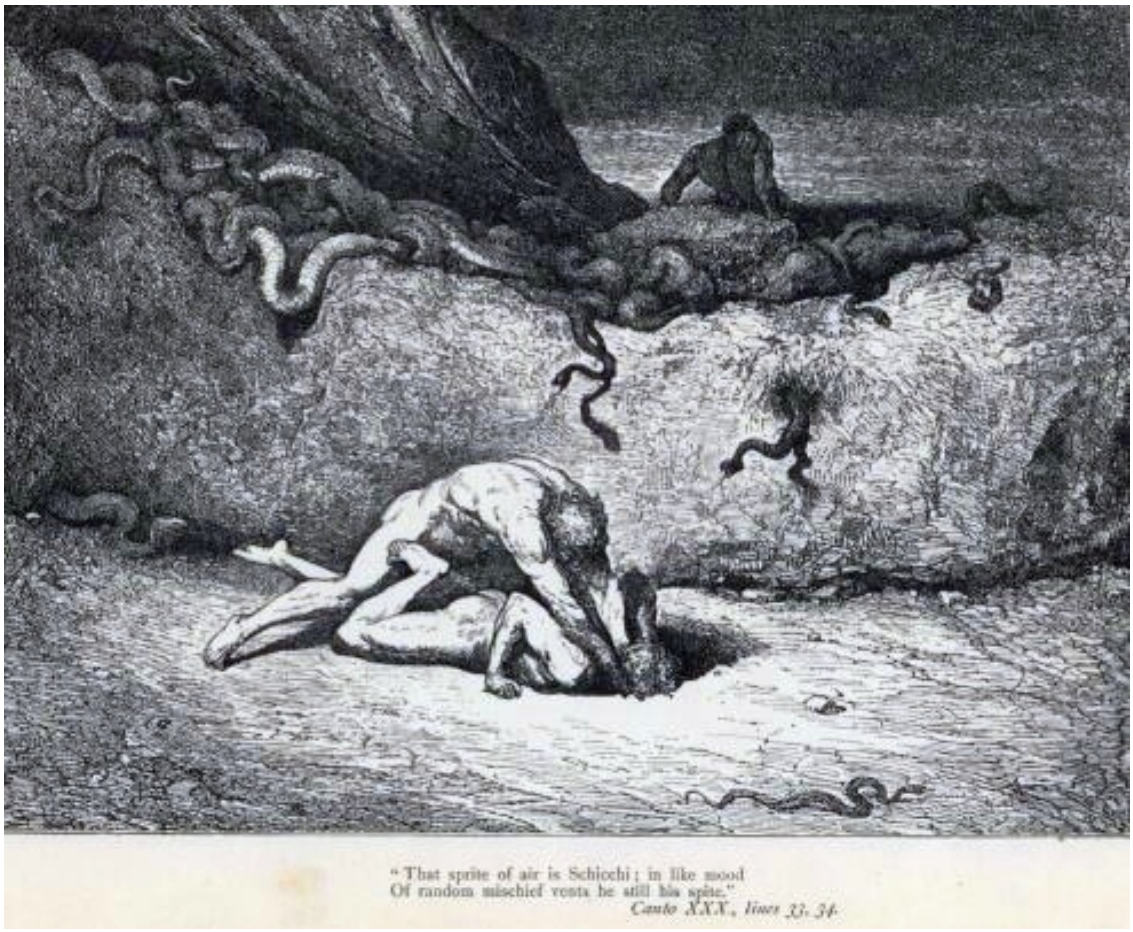
The other leprous spirit heard my words,
And thus return’d: “Be Stricca from this charge
Exempted, he who knew so temp’rately
To lay out fortune’s gifts; and Niccolo
Who first the spice’s costly luxury
Discover’d in that garden, where such seed
Roots deepest in the soil: and be that troop
Exempted, with whom Caccia of Asciano
Lavish’d his vineyards and wide-spreading woods,
And his rare wisdom Abbagliato show’d
A spectacle for all. That thou mayst know
Who seconds thee against the Siennese
Thus gladly, bend this way thy sharpen’d sight,

That well my face may answer to thy ken;
So shalt thou see I am Capocchio’s ghost,
Who forg’d transmuted metals by the power
Of alchemy; and if I scan thee right,
Thus needs must well remember how I aped
Creative nature by my subtle art.”

CANTO XXX

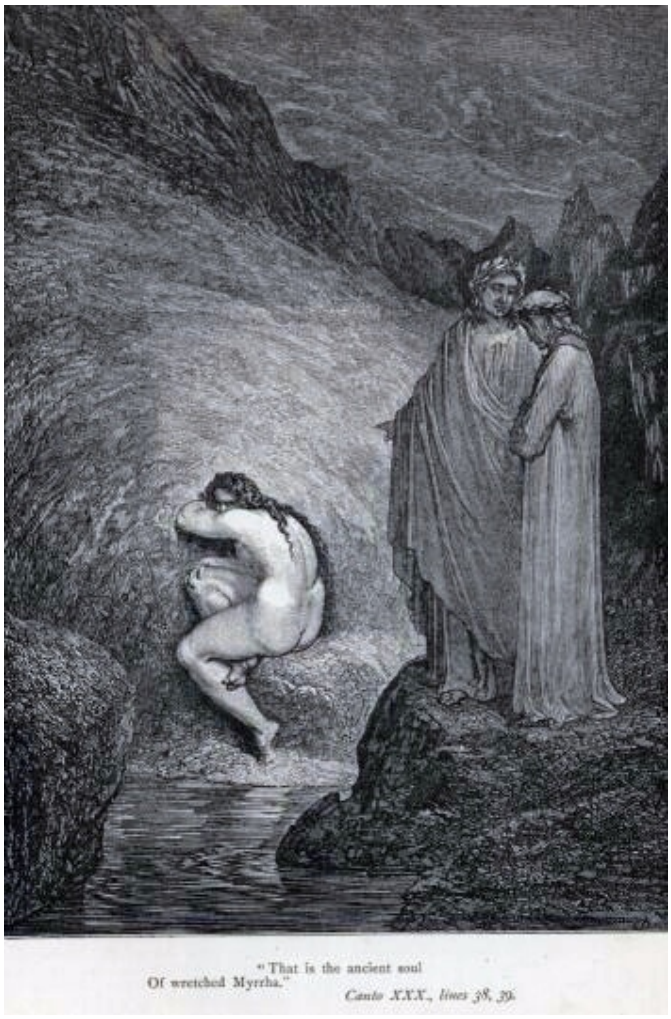
Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

WHAT time resentment burn'd in Juno's breast
For Semele against the Theban blood,
As more than once in dire mischance was rued,
Such fatal frenzy seiz'd on Athamas,
That he his spouse beholding with a babe
Laden on either arm, "Spread out," he cried,
"The meshes, that I take the lioness
And the young lions at the pass:" then forth
Stretch'd he his merciless talons, grasping one,
One helpless innocent, Learchus nam'd,
Whom swinging down he dash'd upon a rock,
And with her other burden self-destroy'd
The hapless mother plung'd: and when the pride
Of all-presuming Troy fell from its height,
By fortune overwhelm'd, and the old king
With his realm perish'd, then did Hecuba,
A wretch forlorn and captive, when she saw
Polyxena first slaughter'd, and her son,
Her Polydorus, on the wild sea-beach
Next met the mourner's view, then reft of sense
Did she run barking even as a dog;
Such mighty power had grief to wrench her soul.
Bet ne'er the Furies or of Thebes or Troy
With such fell cruelty were seen, their goads
Infixing in the limbs of man or beast,
As now two pale and naked ghost I saw
That gnarling wildly scamper'd, like the swine
Excluded from his stye. One reach'd Capocchio,
And in the neck-joint sticking deep his fangs,
Dragg'd him, that o'er the solid pavement rubb'd
His belly stretch'd out prone. The other shape,
He of Arezzo, there left trembling, spake;
"That sprite of air is Schicchi; in like mood
Of random mischief vent he still his spite."



"That sprite of air is Schicchi; in like mood
Of random mischief vents he still his spite."
Canto XXX., lines 33, 34.

To whom I answ'ring: "Oh! as thou dost hope,
The other may not flesh its jaws on thee,
Be patient to inform us, who it is,
Ere it speed hence."— "That is the ancient soul
Of wretched Myrrha," he replied, "who burn'd
With most unholy flame for her own sire,



"That is the ancient soul
Of wretched Myrrha."
Canto XXX., lines 38, 39.

"And a false shape assuming, so perform'd
The deed of sin; e'en as the other there,
That onward passes, dar'd to counterfeit
Donati's features, to feign'd testament
The seal affixing, that himself might gain,
For his own share, the lady of the herd."

When vanish'd the two furious shades, on whom
Mine eye was held, I turn'd it back to view
The other cursed spirits. One I saw
In fashion like a lute, had but the groin
Been sever'd, where it meets the forked part.
Swoln dropsy, disproportioning the limbs
With ill-converted moisture, that the paunch
Suits not the visage, open'd wide his lips

Gasping as in the hectic man for drought,
One towards the chin, the other upward curl'd.

"O ye, who in this world of misery,
Wherefore I know not, are exempt from pain,"
Thus he began, "attentively regard
Adamo's woe. When living, full supply
Ne'er lack'd me of what most I coveted;
One drop of water now, alas! I crave.
The rills, that glitter down the grassy slopes
Of Casentino, making fresh and soft
The banks whereby they glide to Arno's stream,
Stand ever in my view; and not in vain;
For more the pictur'd semblance dries me up,
Much more than the disease, which makes the flesh
Desert these shrivel'd cheeks. So from the place,
Where I transgress'd, stern justice urging me,
Takes means to quicken more my lab'ring sighs.
There is Romena, where I falsified
The metal with the Baptist's form imprest,
For which on earth I left my body burnt.
But if I here might see the sorrowing soul
Of Guido, Alessandro, or their brother,
For Branda's limpid spring I would not change
The welcome sight. One is e'en now within,
If truly the mad spirits tell, that round
Are wand'ring. But wherein besteads me that?
My limbs are fetter'd. Were I but so light,
That I each hundred years might move one inch,
I had set forth already on this path,
Seeking him out amidst the shapeless crew,
Although eleven miles it wind, not more
Than half of one across. They brought me down
Among this tribe; induc'd by them I stamp'd
The florens with three carats of alloy."

"Who are that abject pair," I next inquir'd,
"That closely bounding thee upon thy right
Lie smoking, like a band in winter steep'd

In the chill stream?”— “When to this gulf I dropt,”
He answer’d, “here I found them; since that hour
They have not turn’d, nor ever shall, I ween,
Till time hath run his course. One is that dame
The false accuser of the Hebrew youth;
Sinon the other, that false Greek from Troy.
Sharp fever drains the reeky moistness out,
In such a cloud upsteam’d.” When that he heard,
One, gall’d perchance to be so darkly nam’d,
With clench’d hand smote him on the braced paunch,
That like a drum resounded: but forthwith
Adamo smote him on the face, the blow
Returning with his arm, that seem’d as hard.

“Though my o’erweighty limbs have ta’en from me
The power to move,” said he, “I have an arm
At liberty for such employ.” To whom
Was answer’d: “When thou wentest to the fire,
Thou hadst it not so ready at command,
Then readier when it coin’d th’ impostor gold.”

And thus the dropsied: “Ay, now speak’st thou true.
But there thou gav’st not such true testimony,
When thou wast question’d of the truth, at Troy.”

“If I spake false, thou falsely stamp’dst the coin,”
Said Sinon; “I am here but for one fault,
And thou for more than any imp beside.”

“Remember,” he replied, “O perjur’d one,
The horse remember, that did teem with death,
And all the world be witness to thy guilt.”

“To thine,” return’d the Greek, “witness the thirst
Whence thy tongue cracks, witness the fluid mound,
Rear’d by thy belly up before thine eyes,
A mass corrupt.” To whom the coiner thus:
“Thy mouth gapes wide as ever to let pass
Its evil saying. Me if thirst assails,

Yet I am stuff'd with moisture. Thou art parch'd,
Pains rack thy head, no urging would'st thou need
To make thee lap Narcissus' mirror up."

I was all fix'd to listen, when my guide
Admonish'd: "Now beware: a little more.
And I do quarrel with thee." I perceiv'd
How angrily he spake, and towards him turn'd
With shame so poignant, as remember'd yet
Confounds me. As a man that dreams of harm
Befall'n him, dreaming wishes it a dream,
And that which is, desires as if it were not,
Such then was I, who wanting power to speak
Wish'd to excuse myself, and all the while
Excus'd me, though unweeting that I did.

"More grievous fault than thine has been, less shame,"
My master cried, "might expiate. Therefore cast
All sorrow from thy soul; and if again
Chance bring thee, where like conference is held,
Think I am ever at thy side. To hear
Such wrangling is a joy for vulgar minds."

CANTO XXXI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

THE very tongue, whose keen reproof before
Had wounded me, that either cheek was stain'd,
Now minister'd my cure. So have I heard,
Achilles and his father's javelin caus'd
Pain first, and then the boon of health restor'd.

Turning our back upon the vale of woe,
W cross'd th' encircled mound in silence. There
Was twilight dim, that far long the gloom
Mine eye advanc'd not: but I heard a horn
Sounded aloud. The peal it blew had made
The thunder feeble. Following its course
The adverse way, my strained eyes were bent
On that one spot. So terrible a blast
Orlando blew not, when that dismal rout
O'erthrew the host of Charlemagne, and quench'd
His saintly warfare. Thitherward not long
My head was rais'd, when many lofty towers
Methought I spied. "Master," said I, "what land
Is this?" He answer'd straight: "Too long a space
Of intervening darkness has thine eye
To traverse: thou hast therefore widely err'd
In thy imagining. Thither arriv'd
Thou well shalt see, how distance can delude
The sense. A little therefore urge thee on."

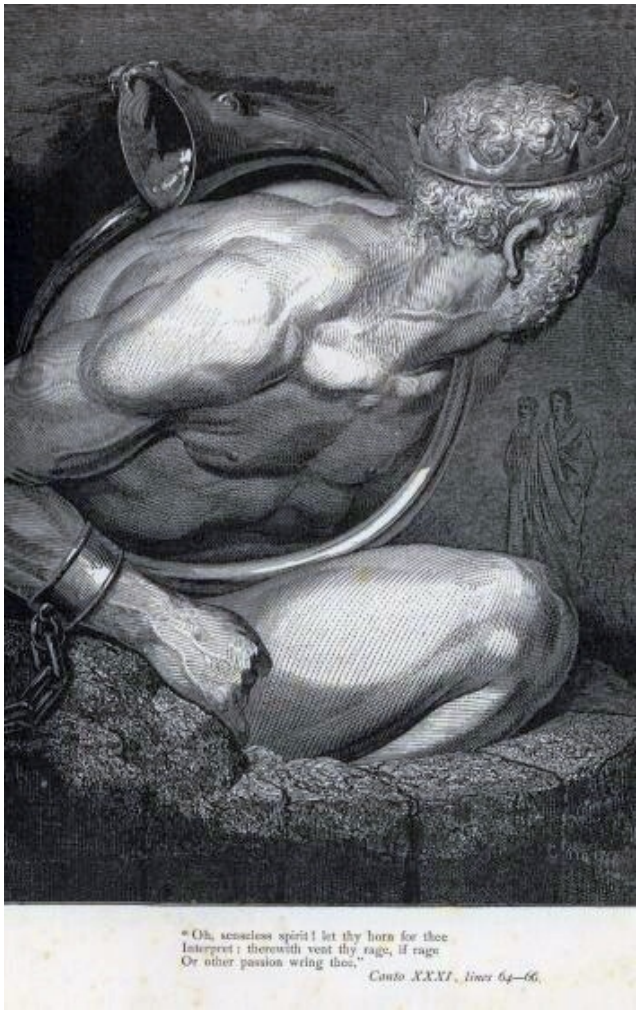
Then tenderly he caught me by the hand;
"Yet know," said he, "ere farther we advance,
That it less strange may seem, these are not towers,
But giants. In the pit they stand immers'd,
Each from his navel downward, round the bank."

As when a fog disperseth gradually,
Our vision traces what the mist involves
Condens'd in air; so piercing through the gross

And gloomy atmosphere, as more and more
We near'd toward the brink, mine error fled,
And fear came o'er me. As with circling round
Of turrets, Montereggion crowns his walls,
E'en thus the shore, encompassing th' abyss,
Was turreted with giants, half their length
Uprearing, horrible, whom Jove from heav'n
Yet threatens, when his mutt'ring thunder rolls.

Of one already I descried the face,
Shoulders, and breast, and of the belly huge
Great part, and both arms down along his ribs.

All-teeming nature, when her plastic hand
Left framing of these monsters, did display
Past doubt her wisdom, taking from mad War
Such slaves to do his bidding; and if she
Repent her not of th' elephant and whale,
Who ponders well confesses her therein
Wiser and more discreet; for when brute force
And evil will are back'd with subtlety,
Resistance none avails. His visage seem'd
In length and bulk, as doth the pine, that tops
Saint Peter's Roman fane; and th' other bones
Of like proportion, so that from above
The bank, which girdled him below, such height
Arose his stature, that three Friezelanders
Had striv'n in vain to reach but to his hair.
Full thirty ample palms was he expos'd
Downward from whence a man his garments loops.
"Raphel bai ameth sabi almi,"
So shouted his fierce lips, which sweeter hymns
Became not; and my guide address'd him thus:



"Oh, senseless spirit! let thy horn for thee
Interpret: therewith vent thy rage, if rage
Or other passion wring thee."
Canto XXXI, lines 64–66.

"O senseless spirit! let thy horn for thee
Interpret: therewith vent thy rage, if rage
Or other passion wring thee. Search thy neck,
There shalt thou find the belt that binds it on.
Wild spirit! lo, upon thy mighty breast
Where hangs the baldrick!" Then to me he spake:
"He doth accuse himself. Nimrod is this,
Through whose ill counsel in the world no more
One tongue prevails. But pass we on, nor waste
Our words; for so each language is to him,
As his to others, understood by none."

Then to the leftward turning sped we forth,
And at a sling's throw found another shade
Far fiercer and more huge. I cannot say

What master hand had girt him; but he held
Behind the right arm fetter'd, and before
The other with a chain, that fasten'd him
From the neck down, and five times round his form
Apparent met the wreathed links. "This proud one
Would of his strength against almighty Jove
Make trial," said my guide; "whence he is thus
Requited: Ephialtes him they call.

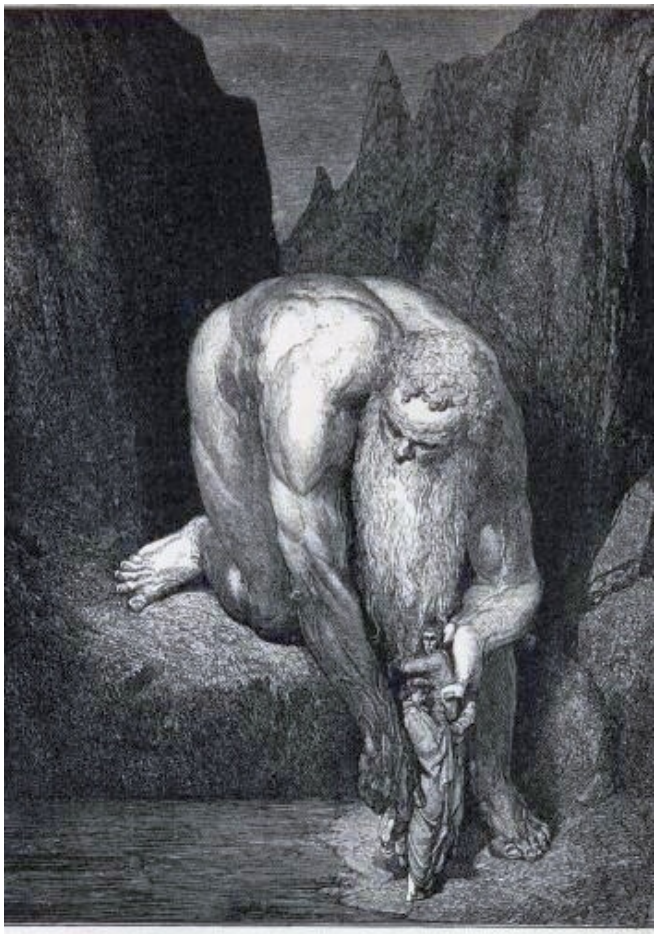
"This proud one
Would of his strength against almighty Jove
Make trial." *Canto XXXI., lines 82—84.*

"Great was his prowess, when the giants brought
Fear on the gods: those arms, which then he piled,
Now moves he never." Forthwith I return'd:
"Fain would I, if 't were possible, mine eyes
Of Briareus immeasurable gain'd
Experience next." He answer'd: "Thou shalt see
Not far from hence Antaeus, who both speaks
And is unfetter'd, who shall place us there

Where guilt is at its depth. Far onward stands
Whom thou wouldst fain behold, in chains, and made
Like to this spirit, save that in his looks
More fell he seems." By violent earthquake rock'd
Ne'er shook a tow'r, so reeling to its base,
As Ephialtes. More than ever then
I dreaded death, nor than the terror more
Had needed, if I had not seen the cords
That held him fast. We, straightway journeying on,
Came to Antaeus, who five ells complete
Without the head, forth issued from the cave.

"O thou, who in the fortunate vale, that made
Great Scipio heir of glory, when his sword
Drove back the troop of Hannibal in flight,
Who thence of old didst carry for thy spoil
An hundred lions; and if thou hadst fought
In the high conflict on thy brethren's side,
Seems as men yet believ'd, that through thine arm
The sons of earth had conquer'd, now vouchsafe
To place us down beneath, where numbing cold
Locks up Cocytus. Force not that we crave
Or Tityus' help or Typhon's. Here is one
Can give what in this realm ye covet. Stoop
Therefore, nor scornfully distort thy lip.
He in the upper world can yet bestow
Renown on thee, for he doth live, and looks
For life yet longer, if before the time
Grace call him not unto herself." Thus spake
The teacher. He in haste forth stretch'd his hands,
And caught my guide. Alcides whilom felt
That grapple straighten'd score. Soon as my guide
Had felt it, he bespake me thus: "This way
That I may clasp thee;" then so caught me up,
That we were both one burden. As appears
The tower of Carisenda, from beneath
Where it doth lean, if chance a passing cloud
So sail across, that opposite it hangs,
Such then Antaeus seem'd, as at mine ease

I mark’d him stooping. I were fain at times
T’ have pass’d another way. Yet in th’ abyss,
That Lucifer with Judas low ingulfs,
lightly he plac’d us; nor there leaning stay’d,
But rose as in a bark the stately mast.



Yet in the abyss,
That Lucifer with Judas low ingulfs,
Lightly he placed us.
Canto XXXI., lines 133—135.

CANTO XXXII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

COULD I command rough rhimes and hoarse, to suit
That hole of sorrow, o'er which ev'ry rock
His firm abutment rears, then might the vein
Of fancy rise full springing: but not mine
Such measures, and with falt'ring awe I touch
The mighty theme; for to describe the depth
Of all the universe, is no emprize
To jest with, and demands a tongue not us'd
To infant babbling. But let them assist
My song, the tuneful maidens, by whose aid
Amphion wall'd in Thebes, so with the truth
My speech shall best accord. Oh ill-starr'd folk,
Beyond all others wretched! who abide
In such a mansion, as scarce thought finds words
To speak of, better had ye here on earth
Been flocks or mountain goats. As down we stood
In the dark pit beneath the giants' feet,
But lower far than they, and I did gaze
Still on the lofty battlement, a voice
Bespoke me thus: "Look how thou walkest. Take
Good heed, thy soles do tread not on the heads
Of thy poor brethren." Thereupon I turn'd,
And saw before and underneath my feet
A lake, whose frozen surface liker seem'd
To glass than water. Not so thick a veil
In winter e'er hath Austrian Danube spread
O'er his still course, nor Tanais far remote
Under the chilling sky. Roll'd o'er that mass
Had Tabernich or Pietrapana fall'n,

"Look how thou walkest. Take
Good heed, thy soles do tread not on the heads
Of thy poor brethren."

Canto XXXII., lines 20—22.

Not e'en its rim had creak'd. As peeps the frog
Croaking above the wave, what time in dreams
The village gleaner oft pursues her toil,
So, to where modest shame appears, thus low
Blue pinch'd and shrin'd in ice the spirits stood,
Moving their teeth in shrill note like the stork.
His face each downward held; their mouth the cold,
Their eyes express'd the dolour of their heart.

A space I look'd around, then at my feet
Saw two so strictly join'd, that of their head
The very hairs were mingled. "Tell me ye,
Whose bosoms thus together press," said I,
"Who are ye?" At that sound their necks they bent,
And when their looks were lifted up to me,
Straightway their eyes, before all moist within,
Distill'd upon their lips, and the frost bound

The tears betwixt those orbs and held them there.
Plank unto plank hath never cramp clos'd up
So stoutly. Whence like two enraged goats
They clash'd together; them such fury seiz'd.

And one, from whom the cold both ears had reft,
Exclaim'd, still looking downward: "Why on us
Dost speculate so long? If thou wouldst know
Who are these two, the valley, whence his wave
Bisenzio slopes, did for its master own
Their sire Alberto, and next him themselves.
They from one body issued; and throughout
Caina thou mayst search, nor find a shade
More worthy in congealment to be fix'd,
Not him, whose breast and shadow Arthur's land
At that one blow dissever'd, not Focaccia,
No not this spirit, whose o'erjutting head
Obstructs my onward view: he bore the name
Of Mascheroni: Tuscan if thou be,
Well knowest who he was: and to cut short
All further question, in my form behold
What once was Camiccione. I await
Carlino here my kinsman, whose deep guilt
Shall wash out mine." A thousand visages
Then mark'd I, which the keen and eager cold
Had shap'd into a doggish grin; whence creeps
A shiv'ring horror o'er me, at the thought
Of those frore shallows. While we journey'd on
Toward the middle, at whose point unites
All heavy substance, and I trembling went
Through that eternal chillness, I know not
If will it were or destiny, or chance,
But, passing 'midst the heads, my foot did strike
With violent blow against the face of one.

"Wherefore dost bruise me?" weeping, he exclaim'd,
"Unless thy errand be some fresh revenge
For Montaperto, wherefore troublest me?"

I thus: “Instructor, now await me here,
That I through him may rid me of my doubt.
Thenceforth what haste thou wilt.” The teacher paus’d,
And to that shade I spake, who bitterly
Still curs’d me in his wrath. ”What art thou, speak,
That railest thus on others?” He replied:
“Now who art thou, that smiting others’ cheeks
Through Antenora roamest, with such force
As were past suff’rance, wert thou living still?”

“And I am living, to thy joy perchance,”
Was my reply, “if fame be dear to thee,
That with the rest I may thy name enrol.”

“The contrary of what I covet most,”
Said he, “thou tender’st: hence; nor vex me more.
Ill knowest thou to flatter in this vale.”

Then seizing on his hinder scalp I cried:
“Name thee, or not a hair shall tarry here!”
Canto XXXII., lines 97, 98

Then seizing on his hinder scalp, I cried:
“Name thee, or not a hair shall tarry here.”

“Rend all away,” he answer’d, “yet for that
I will not tell nor show thee who I am,
Though at my head thou pluck a thousand times.”

Now I had grasp’d his tresses, and stript off
More than one tuft, he barking, with his eyes
Drawn in and downward, when another cried,
“What ails thee, Bocca? Sound not loud enough
Thy chatt’ring teeth, but thou must bark outright?
“What devil wrings thee?”— “Now,” said I, “be dumb,
Accursed traitor! to thy shame of thee
True tidings will I bear.”— “Off,” he replied,
“Tell what thou list; but as thou escape from hence
To speak of him whose tongue hath been so glib,
Forget not: here he wails the Frenchman’s gold.
‘Him of Duera,’ thou canst say, ‘I mark’d,
Where the starv’d sinners pine.’ If thou be ask’d
What other shade was with them, at thy side
Is Beccaria, whose red gorge distain’d
The biting axe of Florence. Farther on,
If I misdeem not, Soldanieri bides,
With Ganellon, and Tribaldello, him
Who op’d Faenza when the people slept.”

We now had left him, passing on our way,
When I beheld two spirits by the ice
Pent in one hollow, that the head of one
Was cowl unto the other; and as bread
Is raven’d up through hunger, th’ uppermost
Did so apply his fangs to th’ other’s brain,
Where the spine joins it. Not more furiously
On Menalippus’ temples Tydeus gnaw’d,
Than on that skull and on its garbage he.

Not more furiously
On Menalippus' temples Tydeus gnawed,
Than on that skull and on its garbage he.
Canto XXXII., lines 127–129.

“O thou who show’st so beastly sign of hate
‘Gainst him thou prey’st on, let me hear,” said I
“The cause, on such condition, that if right
Warrant thy grievance, knowing who ye are,
And what the colour of his sinning was,
I may repay thee in the world above,
If that, wherewith I speak be moist so long.”

CANTO XXXIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

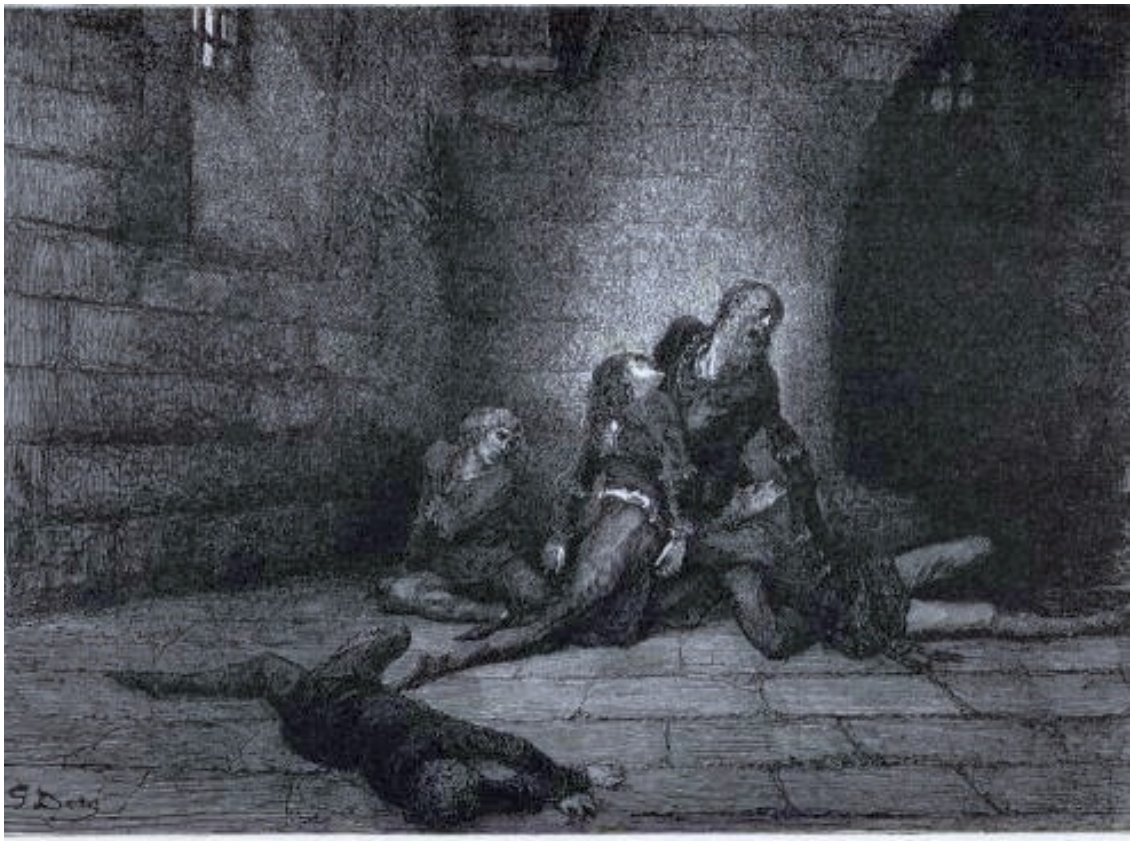
HIS jaws uplifting from their fell repast,
That sinner wip'd them on the hairs o' th' head,
Which he behind had mangled, then began:
"Thy will obeying, I call up afresh
Sorrow past cure, which but to think of wrings
My heart, or ere I tell on't. But if words,
That I may utter, shall prove seed to bear
Fruit of eternal infamy to him,
The traitor whom I gnaw at, thou at once
Shalt see me speak and weep. Who thou mayst be
I know not, nor how here below art come:
But Florentine thou seemest of a truth,
When I do hear thee. Know I was on earth
Count Ugolino, and th' Archbishop he
Ruggieri. Why I neighbour him so close,
Now list. That through effect of his ill thoughts
In him my trust reposing, I was ta'en
And after murder'd, need is not I tell.
What therefore thou canst not have heard, that is,
How cruel was the murder, shalt thou hear,
And know if he have wrong'd me. A small grate
Within that mew, which for my sake the name
Of famine bears, where others yet must pine,
Already through its opening sev'ral moons
Had shown me, when I slept the evil sleep,
That from the future tore the curtain off.
This one, methought, as master of the sport,
Rode forth to chase the gaunt wolf and his whelps
Unto the mountain, which forbids the sight
Of Lucca to the Pisan. With lean brachs
Inquisitive and keen, before him rang'd
Lanfranchi with Sismondi and Gualandi.
After short course the father and the sons
Seem'd tir'd and lagging, and methought I saw

The sharp tusks gore their sides. When I awoke
Before the dawn, amid their sleep I heard
My sons (for they were with me) weep and ask
For bread. Right cruel art thou, if no pang
Thou feel at thinking what my heart foretold;
And if not now, why use thy tears to flow?
Now had they waken'd; and the hour drew near
When they were wont to bring us food; the mind
Of each misgave him through his dream, and I
Heard, at its outlet underneath lock'd up
The' horrible tower: whence uttering not a word
I look'd upon the visage of my sons.
I wept not: so all stone I felt within.
They wept: and one, my little Anslem, cried:
'Thou lookest so! Father what ails thee?' Yet
I shed no tear, nor answer'd all that day
Nor the next night, until another sun
Came out upon the world. When a faint beam
Had to our doleful prison made its way,
And in four countenances I descry'd
The image of my own, on either hand
Through agony I bit, and they who thought
I did it through desire of feeding, rose
O' th' sudden, and cried, 'Father, we should grieve
Far less, if thou wouldst eat of us: thou gav'st
These weeds of miserable flesh we wear,

Then, not to make them sadder, I kept down
My spirit in stillness.

Canto XXXIII., lines 62, 63.

And do thou strip them off from us again.'
Then, not to make them sadder, I kept down
My spirit in stillness. That day and the next
We all were silent. Ah, obdurate earth!
Why open'dst not upon us? When we came
To the fourth day, then Geddo at my feet
Outstretch'd did fling him, crying, 'Hast no help
For me, my father!' There he died, and e'en
Plainly as thou seest me, saw I the three
Fall one by one 'twixt the fifth day and sixth:



"Hast no help
For me, my father?"
Canto XXXIII., lines 67, 68.

Whence I betook me now grown blind to grope
Over them all, and for three days aloud
Call'd on them who were dead. Then fasting got
The mastery of grief." Thus having spoke,

Then, fasting got
The mastery of grief.

Canto XXXIII., lines 73, 74.

Once more upon the wretched skull his teeth
He fasten'd, like a mastiff's 'gainst the bone
Firm and unyielding. Oh thou Pisa! shame
Of all the people, who their dwelling make
In that fair region, where th' Italian voice
Is heard, since that thy neighbours are so slack
To punish, from their deep foundations rise
Capraia and Gorgona, and dam up
The mouth of Arno, that each soul in thee
May perish in the waters! What if fame
Reported that thy castles were betray'd
By Ugolino, yet no right hadst thou
To stretch his children on the rack. For them,
Brigata, Ugaccione, and the pair
Of gentle ones, of whom my song hath told,
Their tender years, thou modern Thebes! did make
Uncapable of guilt. Onward we pass'd,

Where others skarf'd in rugged folds of ice
Not on their feet were turn'd, but each revers'd.

There very weeping suffers not to weep;
For at their eyes grief seeking passage finds
Impediment, and rolling inward turns
For increase of sharp anguish: the first tears
Hang cluster'd, and like crystal vizors show,
Under the socket brimming all the cup.

Now though the cold had from my face dislodg'd
Each feeling, as 't were callous, yet me seem'd
Some breath of wind I felt. "Whence cometh this,"
Said I, "my master? Is not here below
All vapour quench'd?"—"'Thou shalt be speedily,"
He answer'd, "where thine eye shall tell thee whence
The cause descrying of this airy shower."

Then cried out one in the chill crust who mourn'd:
"O souls so cruel! that the farthest post
Hath been assign'd you, from this face remove
The harden'd veil, that I may vent the grief
Impregnate at my heart, some little space
Ere it congeal again!" I thus replied:
"Say who thou wast, if thou wouldst have mine aid;
And if I extricate thee not, far down
As to the lowest ice may I descend!"

"The friar Alberigo," answered he,
"Am I, who from the evil garden pluck'd
Its fruitage, and am here repaid, the date
More luscious for my fig."— "Hah!" I exclaim'd,
"Art thou too dead!"— "How in the world aloft
It fareth with my body," answer'd he,
"I am right ignorant. Such privilege
Hath Ptolomea, that ofttimes the soul
Drops hither, ere by Atropos divorc'd.
And that thou mayst wipe out more willingly
The glazed tear-drops that o'erlay mine eyes,

Know that the soul, that moment she betrays,
As I did, yields her body to a fiend
Who after moves and governs it at will,
Till all its time be rounded; headlong she
Falls to this cistern. And perchance above
Doth yet appear the body of a ghost,
Who here behind me winters. Him thou know'st,
If thou but newly art arriv'd below.
The years are many that have pass'd away,
Since to this fastness Branca Doria came."

"Now," answer'd I, "methinks thou mockest me,
For Branca Doria never yet hath died,
But doth all natural functions of a man,
Eats, drinks, and sleeps, and putteth raiment on."

He thus: "Not yet unto that upper foss
By th' evil talons guarded, where the pitch
Tenacious boils, had Michael Zanche reach'd,
When this one left a demon in his stead
In his own body, and of one his kin,
Who with him treachery wrought. But now put forth
Thy hand, and ope mine eyes." I op'd them not.
Ill manners were best courtesy to him.

Ah Genoese! men perverse in every way,
With every foulness stain'd, why from the earth
Are ye not cancel'd? Such an one of yours
I with Romagna's darkest spirit found,
As for his doings even now in soul
Is in Cocytus plung'd, and yet doth seem
In body still alive upon the earth.

CANTO XXXIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"THE banners of Hell's Monarch do come forth
Towards us; therefore look," so spake my guide,
"If thou discern him." As, when breathes a cloud
Heavy and dense, or when the shades of night
Fall on our hemisphere, seems view'd from far
A windmill, which the blast stirs briskly round,
Such was the fabric then methought I saw,

To shield me from the wind, forthwith I drew
Behind my guide: no covert else was there.

Now came I (and with fear I bid my strain
Record the marvel) where the souls were all
Whelm'd underneath, transparent, as through glass
Pellucid the frail stem. Some prone were laid,
Others stood upright, this upon the soles,
That on his head, a third with face to feet
Arch'd like a bow. When to the point we came,
Whereat my guide was pleas'd that I should see
The creature eminent in beauty once,
He from before me stepp'd and made me pause.

"Lo!" he exclaimed, "lo! Dis; and lo! the place
Where thou hast need to arm thy heart with strength."
Canto XXXIV., lines 20, 21.

"Lo!" he exclaim'd, "lo Dis! and lo the place,
Where thou hast need to arm thy heart with strength."

How frozen and how faint I then became,
Ask me not, reader! for I write it not,
Since words would fail to tell thee of my state.
I was not dead nor living. Think thyself
If quick conception work in thee at all,
How I did feel. That emperor, who sways
The realm of sorrow, at mid breast from th' ice
Stood forth; and I in stature am more like
A giant, than the giants are in his arms.
Mark now how great that whole must be, which suits
With such a part. If he were beautiful
As he is hideous now, and yet did dare
To scowl upon his Maker, well from him
May all our mis'ry flow. Oh what a sight!

How passing strange it seem'd, when I did spy
Upon his head three faces: one in front
Of hue vermilion, th' other two with this
Midway each shoulder join'd and at the crest;
The right 'twixt wan and yellow seem'd: the left
To look on, such as come from whence old Nile
Stoops to the lowlands. Under each shot forth
Two mighty wings, enormous as became
A bird so vast. Sails never such I saw
Outstretch'd on the wide sea. No plumes had they,
But were in texture like a bat, and these
He flapp'd i' th' air, that from him issued still
Three winds, wherewith Cocytus to its depth
Was frozen. At six eyes he wept: the tears
Adown three chins distill'd with bloody foam.
At every mouth his teeth a sinner champ'd
Bruis'd as with pond'rous engine, so that three
Were in this guise tormented. But far more
Than from that gnawing, was the foremost pang'd
By the fierce rending, whence ofttimes the back
Was stript of all its skin. "That upper spirit,
Who hath worse punishment," so spake my guide,
"Is Judas, he that hath his head within
And plies the feet without. Of th' other two,
Whose heads are under, from the murky jaw
Who hangs, is Brutus: lo! how he doth writhe
And speaks not! Th' other Cassius, that appears
So large of limb. But night now re-ascends,
And it is time for parting. All is seen."

I clipp'd him round the neck, for so he bade;
And noting time and place, he, when the wings
Enough were op'd, caught fast the shaggy sides,
And down from pile to pile descending stepp'd
Between the thick fell and the jagged ice.

Soon as he reach'd the point, whereat the thigh
Upon the swelling of the haunches turns,
My leader there with pain and struggling hard
Turn'd round his head, where his feet stood before

Turn'd round his head, where his feet stood before,
And grappled at the fell, as one who mounts,
That into hell methought we turn'd again.

"Expect that by such stairs as these," thus spake
The teacher, panting like a man forespent,
"We must depart from evil so extreme."
Then at a rocky opening issued forth,
And plac'd me on a brink to sit, next join'd
With wary step my side. I rais'd mine eyes,
Believing that I Lucifer should see
Where he was lately left, but saw him now
With legs held upward. Let the grosser sort,
Who see not what the point was I had pass'd,
Bethink them if sore toil oppress'd me then.

"Arise," my master cried, "upon thy feet.
The way is long, and much uncouth the road;
And now within one hour and half of noon
The sun returns." It was no palace-hall
Lofty and luminous wherein we stood,
But natural dungeon where ill footing was
And scant supply of light. "Ere from th' abyss
I sep'rate," thus when risen I began,
"My guide! vouchsafe few words to set me free
From error's thralldom. Where is now the ice?
How standeth he in posture thus revers'd?
And how from eve to morn in space so brief
Hath the sun made his transit?" He in few
Thus answering spake: "Thou deemest thou art still
On th' other side the centre, where I grasp'd
Th' abhorred worm, that boreth through the world.
Thou wast on th' other side, so long as I
Descended; when I turn'd, thou didst o'erpass
That point, to which from ev'ry part is dragg'd
All heavy substance. Thou art now arriv'd
Under the hemisphere opposed to that,
Which the great continent doth overspread,
And underneath whose canopy expir'd

The Man, that was born sinless, and so liv'd.
Thy feet are planted on the smallest sphere,
Whose other aspect is Judecca. Morn
Here rises, when there evening sets: and he,
Whose shaggy pile was scal'd, yet standeth fix'd,
As at the first. On this part he fell down
From heav'n; and th' earth, here prominent before,
Through fear of him did veil her with the sea,
And to our hemisphere retir'd. Perchance
To shun him was the vacant space left here
By what of firm land on this side appears,
That sprang aloof." There is a place beneath,
From Belzebub as distant, as extends
The vaulted tomb, discover'd not by sight,
But by the sound of brooklet, that descends
This way along the hollow of a rock,
Which, as it winds with no precipitous course,
The wave hath eaten. By that hidden way
My guide and I did enter, to return
To the fair world: and heedless of repose
We climbed, he first, I following his steps,
Till on our view the beautiful lights of heav'n
Dawn'd through a circular opening in the cave:
Thus issuing we again beheld the stars.

PURGATORY

CANTO I

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

O'er better waves to speed her rapid course
The light bark of my genius lifts the sail,
Well pleas'd to leave so cruel sea behind;
And of that second region will I sing,
In which the human spirit from sinful blot
Is purg'd, and for ascent to Heaven prepares.

Here, O ye hallow'd Nine! for in your train
I follow, here the deadened strain revive;
Nor let Calliope refuse to sound
A somewhat higher song, of that loud tone,
Which when the wretched birds of chattering note
Had heard, they of forgiveness lost all hope.

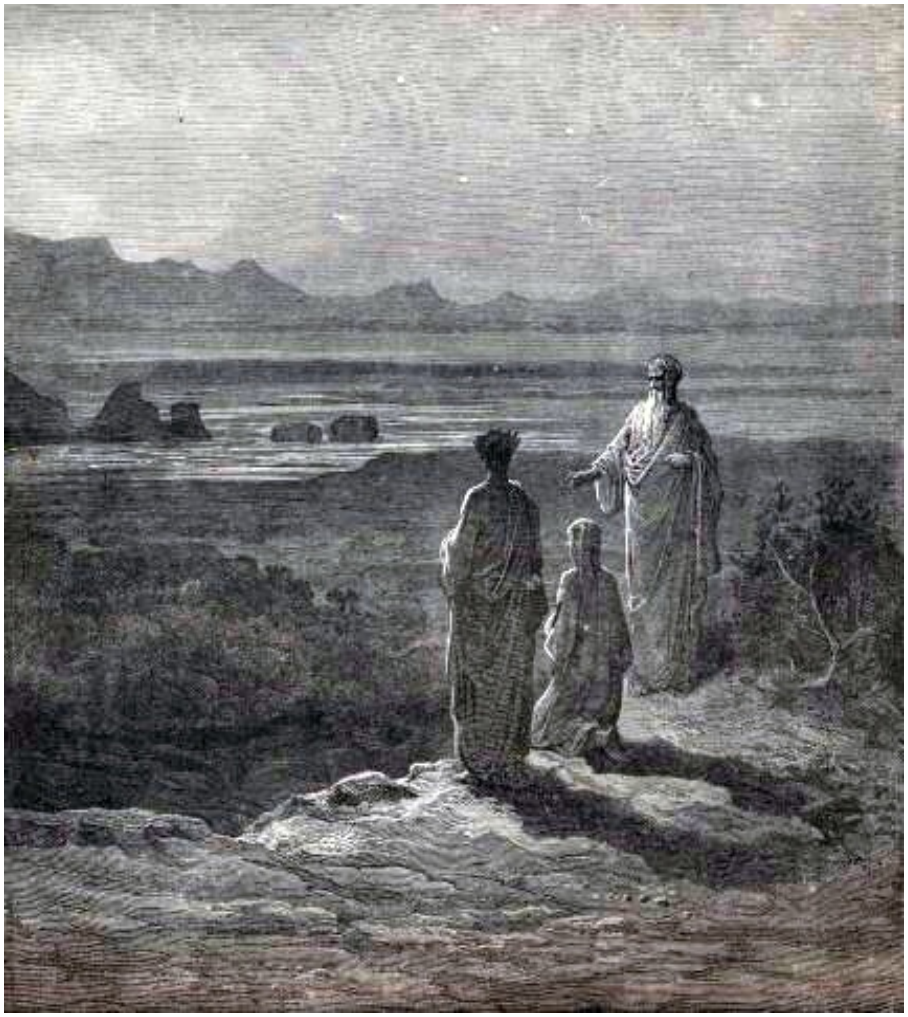
Sweet hue of eastern sapphire, that was spread
O'er the serene aspect of the pure air,
High up as the first circle, to mine eyes
Unwonted joy renew'd, soon as I 'scap'd
Forth from the atmosphere of deadly gloom,
That had mine eyes and bosom fill'd with grief.
The radiant planet, that to love invites,
Made all the orient laugh, and veil'd beneath
The Pisces' light, that in his escort came.

To the right hand I turn'd, and fix'd my mind
On the' other pole attentive, where I saw
Four stars ne'er seen before save by the ken
Of our first parents. Heaven of their rays
Seem'd joyous. O thou northern site, bereft
Indeed, and widow'd, since of these depriv'd!

As from this view I had desisted, straight
Turning a little tow'rds the other pole,
There from whence now the wain had disappear'd,
I saw an old man standing by my side
Alone, so worthy of rev'rence in his look,
That ne'er from son to father more was ow'd.
Low down his beard and mix'd with hoary white
Descended, like his locks, which parting fell

Upon his breast in double fold. The beams
Of those four luminaries on his face
So brightly shone, and with such radiance clear
Deck'd it, that I beheld him as the sun.

"Say who are ye, that stemming the blind stream,
Forth from th' eternal prison-house have fled?"
He spoke and moved those venerable plumes.
"Who hath conducted, or with lantern sure
Lights you emerging from the depth of night,
That makes the infernal valley ever black?
Are the firm statutes of the dread abyss
Broken, or in high heaven new laws ordain'd,
That thus, condemn'd, ye to my caves approach?"



My guide, then laying hold on me, by words

My guide, then laying hold on me, by words
And intimations given with hand and head,
Made my bent knees and eye submissive pay
Due reverence; then thus to him replied.

“Not of myself I come; a Dame from heaven
Descending, had besought me in my charge
To bring. But since thy will implies, that more
Our true condition I unfold at large,
Mine is not to deny thee thy request.
This mortal ne’er hath seen the farthest gloom.
But erring by his folly had approach’d
So near, that little space was left to turn.
Then, as before I told, I was dispatch’d
To work his rescue, and no way remain’d
Save this which I have ta’en. I have display’d
Before him all the regions of the bad;
And purpose now those spirits to display,
That under thy command are purg’d from sin.
How I have brought him would be long to say.
From high descends the virtue, by whose aid
I to thy sight and hearing him have led.
Now may our coming please thee. In the search
Of liberty he journeys: that how dear
They know, who for her sake have life refus’d.
Thou knowest, to whom death for her was sweet
In Utica, where thou didst leave those weeds,
That in the last great day will shine so bright.
For us the’ eternal edicts are unmov’d:
He breathes, and I am free of Minos’ power,
Abiding in that circle where the eyes
Of thy chaste Marcia beam, who still in look
Prays thee, O hallow’d spirit! to own her shine.
Then by her love we’ implore thee, let us pass
Through thy sev’n regions; for which best thanks
I for thy favour will to her return,
If mention there below thou not disdain.”

“Marcia so pleasing in my sight was found,”
He then to him rejoin’d, “while I was there,

That all she ask’d me I was fain to grant.
Now that beyond the’ accursed stream she dwells,
She may no longer move me, by that law,
Which was ordain’d me, when I issued thence.
Not so, if Dame from heaven, as thou sayst,
Moves and directs thee; then no flattery needs.
Enough for me that in her name thou ask.
Go therefore now: and with a slender reed
See that thou duly gird him, and his face
Lave, till all sordid stain thou wipe from thence.
For not with eye, by any cloud obscur’d,
Would it be seemly before him to come,
Who stands the foremost minister in heaven.
This islet all around, there far beneath,
Where the wave beats it, on the oozy bed
Produces store of reeds. No other plant,
Cover’d with leaves, or harden’d in its stalk,
There lives, not bending to the water’s sway.
After, this way return not; but the sun
Will show you, that now rises, where to take
The mountain in its easiest ascent.”

He disappear’d; and I myself uprais’d
Speechless, and to my guide retiring close,
Toward him turn’d mine eyes. He thus began;
“My son! observant thou my steps pursue.
We must retreat to rearward, for that way
The champain to its low extreme declines.”

The dawn had chas’d the matin hour of prime,
Which deaf before it, so that from afar
I spy’d the trembling of the ocean stream.

We travers’d the deserted plain, as one
Who, wander’d from his track, thinks every step
Trodden in vain till he regain the path.

When we had come, where yet the tender dew
Strove with the sun, and in a place, where fresh
The wind breath’d o’er it, while it slowly dried;

The wind stream'd over it, while it slowly dried,
Both hands extended on the watery grass
My master plac'd, in graceful act and kind.
Whence I of his intent before appriz'd,
Stretch'd out to him my cheeks suffus'd with tears.
There to my visage he anew restor'd
That hue, which the dun shades of hell conceal'd.

Then on the solitary shore arriv'd,
That never sailing on its waters saw
Man, that could after measure back his course,
He girt me in such manner as had pleas'd
Him who instructed, and O, strange to tell!
As he selected every humble plant,
Wherever one was pluck'd, another there
Resembling, straightway in its place arose.

CANTO II

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now had the sun to that horizon reach'd,
That covers, with the most exalted point
Of its meridian circle, Salem's walls,
And night, that opposite to him her orb
Sounds, from the stream of Ganges issued forth,
Holding the scales, that from her hands are dropp'd
When she reigns highest: so that where I was,
Aurora's white and vermeil-tinctur'd cheek
To orange turn'd as she in age increas'd.

Meanwhile we linger'd by the water's brink,
Like men, who, musing on their road, in thought
Journey, while motionless the body rests.
When lo! as near upon the hour of dawn,
Through the thick vapours Mars with fiery beam
Glares down in west, over the ocean floor;
So seem'd, what once again I hope to view,
A light so swiftly coming through the sea,
No winged course might equal its career.
From which when for a space I had withdrawn
Thine eyes, to make inquiry of my guide,
Again I look'd and saw it grown in size
And brightness: thou on either side appear'd
Something, but what I knew not of bright hue,
And by degrees from underneath it came
Another. My preceptor silent yet
Stood, while the brightness, that we first discern'd,
Open'd the form of wings: then when he knew
The pilot, cried aloud, "Down, down; bend low
Thy knees; behold God's angel: fold thy hands:
Now shalt thou see true Ministers indeed."

Lo how all human means he sets at naught!
So that nor oar he needs, nor other sail
Except his wings, between such distant shores.
Lo how straight up to heaven he holds them rear'd,
Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes,
That not like mortal hairs fall off or change!"

As more and more toward us came, more bright
Appear'd the bird of God, nor could the eye
Endure his splendor near: I mine bent down.
He drove ashore in a small bark so swift
And light, that in its course no wave it drank.
The heav'nly steersman at the prow was seen,
Visibly written blessed in his looks.

Within a hundred spirits and more there sat.
“In Exitu Israel de Aegypto;”
All with one voice together sang, with what
In the remainder of that hymn is writ.
Then soon as with the sign of holy cross
He bless’d them, they at once leap’d out on land,
The swiftly as he came return’d. The crew,
There left, appear’d astounded with the place,
Gazing around as one who sees new sights.

From every side the sun darted his beams,
And with his arrowy radiance from mid heav’n
Had chas’d the Capricorn, when that strange tribe
Lifting their eyes towards us: “If ye know,
Declare what path will Lead us to the mount.”

Them Virgil answer'd. "Ye suppose perchance
Us well acquainted with this place: but here,
We, as yourselves, are strangers. Not long erst
We came, before you but a little space,
By other road so rough and hard, that now
The' ascent will seem to us as play." The spirits,
Who from my breathing had perceiv'd I liv'd,
Grew pale with wonder. As the multitude
Flock round a herald, sent with olive branch,
To hear what news he brings, and in their haste
Tread one another down, e'en so at sight
Of me those happy spirits were fix'd, each one
Forgetful of its errand, to depart,
Where cleans'd from sin, it might be made all fair.

Then one I saw darting before the rest
With such fond ardour to embrace me, I
To do the like was mov'd. O shadows vain
Except in outward semblance! thrice my hands
I clasp'd behind it, they as oft return'd
Empty into my breast again. Surprise
I needs must think was painted in my looks,
For that the shadow smil'd and backward drew.
To follow it I hasten'd, but with voice
Of sweetness it enjoin'd me to desist.
Then who it was I knew, and pray'd of it,
To talk with me, it would a little pause.
It answered: "Thee as in my mortal frame
I lov'd, so loos'd forth it I love thee still,
And therefore pause; but why walkest thou here?"

"Not without purpose once more to return,
Thou find'st me, my Casella, where I am
Journeying this way;" I said, "but how of thee
Hath so much time been lost?" He answer'd straight:
"No outrage hath been done to me, if he
Who when and whom he chooses takes, me oft
This passage hath denied, since of just will
His will he makes. These three months past indeed,

He, whose chose to enter, with free leave
Hath taken; whence I wand'ring by the shore
Where Tyber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd kind
Admittance, at that river's mouth, tow'rd which
His wings are pointed, for there always throng
All such as not to Archeron descend."

Then I: "If new laws have not quite destroy'd
Memory and use of that sweet song of love,
That while all my cares had power to 'swage;
Please thee with it a little to console
My spirit, that incumber'd with its frame,
Travelling so far, of pain is overcome."

"Love that discourses in my thoughts." He then
Began in such soft accents, that within
The sweetness thrills me yet. My gentle guide
And all who came with him, so well were pleas'd,
That seem'd naught else might in their thoughts have room.

Fast fix'd in mute attention to his notes
We stood, when lo! that old man venerable
Exclaiming, "How is this, ye tardy spirits?
What negligence detains you loit'ring here?
Run to the mountain to cast off those scales,
That from your eyes the sight of God conceal."

As a wild flock of pigeons, to their food
Collected, blade or tares, without their pride
Accustom'd, and in still and quiet sort,
If aught alarm them, suddenly desert
Their meal, assail'd by more important care;
So I that new-come troop beheld, the song
Deserting, hasten to the mountain's side,
As one who goes yet where he tends knows not.

Nor with less hurried step did we depart.

CANTO III

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

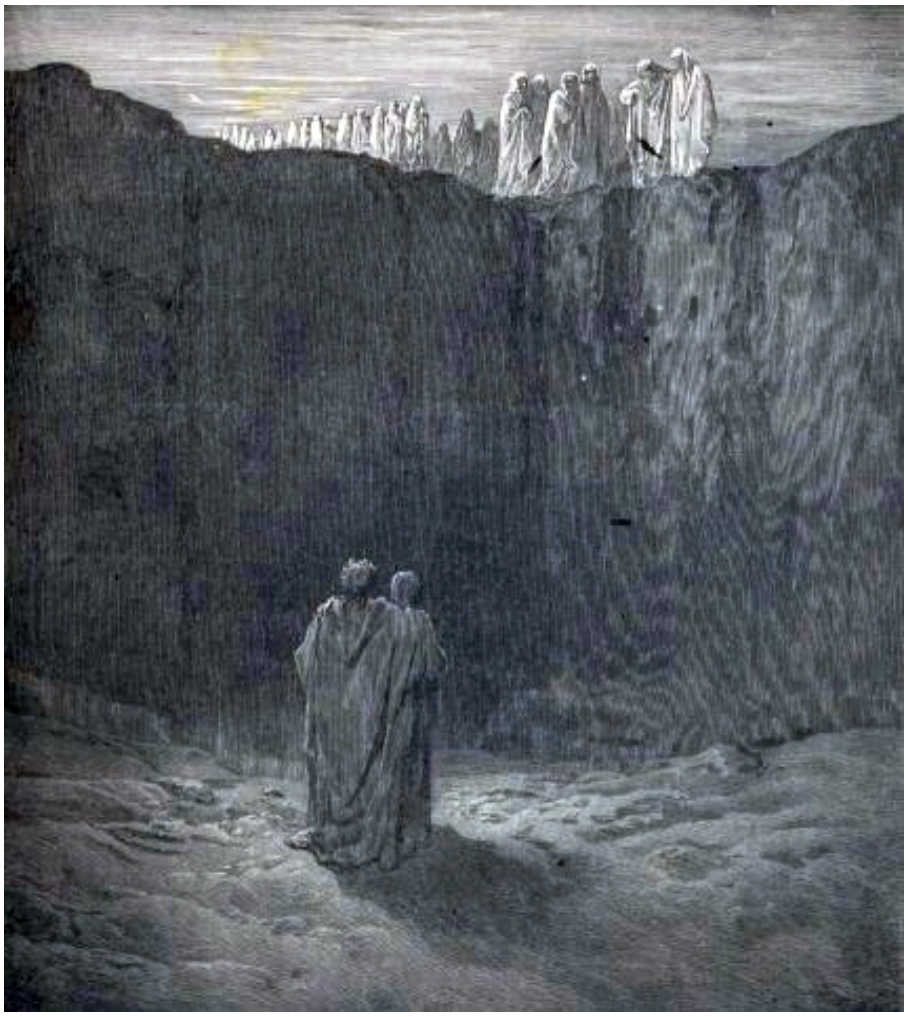
Them sudden flight had scatter'd over the plain,
Turn'd tow'rds the mountain, whither reason's voice
Drives us; I to my faithful company
Adhering, left it not. For how of him
Depriv'd, might I have sped, or who beside
Would o'er the mountainous tract have led my steps
He with the bitter pang of self-remorse
Seem'd smitten. O clear conscience and upright
How doth a little fling wound thee sore!

Soon as his feet desisted (slack'ning pace),
From haste, that mars all decency of act,
My mind, that in itself before was wrapt,
Its thoughts expanded, as with joy restor'd:
And full against the steep ascent I set
My face, where highest to heav'n its top o'erflows.

The sun, that flar'd behind, with ruddy beam
Before my form was broken; for in me
His rays resistance met. I turn'd aside
With fear of being left, when I beheld
Only before myself the ground obscur'd.
When thus my solace, turning him around,
Bespake me kindly: "Why distrustest thou?
Believ'st not I am with thee, thy sure guide?
It now is evening there, where buried lies
The body, in which I cast a shade, remov'd
To Naples from Brundusium's wall. Nor thou
Marvel, if before me no shadow fall,
More than that in the sky element
One ray obstructs not other. To endure
Torments of heat and cold extreme, like frames
That virtue hath dispos'd, which how it works
Wills not to us should be reveal'd. Insane
Who hopes, our reason may that space explore,

Which holds three persons in one substance knit.
Seek not the wherefore, race of human kind;
Could ye have seen the whole, no need had been
For Mary to bring forth. Moreover ye
Have seen such men desiring fruitlessly;
To whose desires repose would have been giv'n,
That now but serve them for eternal grief.
I speak of Plato, and the Stagyrite,
And others many more." And then he bent
Downwards his forehead, and in troubled mood
Broke off his speech. Meanwhile we had arriv'd
Far as the mountain's foot, and there the rock
Found of so steep ascent, that nimblest steps
To climb it had been vain. The most remote
Most wild untrodden path, in all the tract
'Twixt Lerice and Turbia were to this
A ladder easy' and open of access.

"Who knows on which hand now the steep declines?"
My master said and paus'd, "so that he may
Ascend, who journeys without aid of wine?"
And while with looks directed to the ground
The meaning of the pathway he explor'd,
And I gaz'd upward round the stony height,
Of spirits, that toward us mov'd their steps,
Yet moving seem'd not, they so slow approach'd.



I thus my guide address’d: “Upraise thine eyes,
Lo that way some, of whom thou may’st obtain
Counsel, if of thyself thou find’st it not!”

Straightway he look’d, and with free speech replied:
“Let us tend thither: they but softly come.
And thou be firm in hope, my son belov’d.”

Now was that people distant far in space
A thousand paces behind ours, as much
As at a throw the nervous arm could fling,
When all drew backward on the messy crags
Of the steep bank, and firmly stood unmov’d
As one who walks in doubt might stand to look.

“O spirits perfect! O already chosen!”

Virgil to them began, “by that blest peace,
Which, as I deem, is for you all prepar’d,
Instruct us where the mountain low declines,
So that attempt to mount it be not vain.
For who knows most, him loss of time most grieves.”

As sheep, that step from forth their fold, by one,
Or pairs, or three at once; meanwhile the rest
Stand fearfully, bending the eye and nose
To ground, and what the foremost does, that do
The others, gath’ring round her, if she stops,
Simple and quiet, nor the cause discern;
So saw I moving to advance the first,
Who of that fortunate crew were at the head,
Of modest mien and graceful in their gait.
When they before me had beheld the light
From my right side fall broken on the ground,
So that the shadow reach’d the cave, they stopp’d
And somewhat back retir’d: the same did all,
Who follow’d, though unweeting of the cause.

“Unask’d of you, yet freely I confess,
This is a human body which ye see.
That the sun’s light is broken on the ground,
Marvel not: but believe, that not without
Virtue deriv’d from Heaven, we to climb
Over this wall aspire.” So them bespake
My master; and that virtuous tribe rejoin’d;
“Turn, and before you there the entrance lies,”
Making a signal to us with bent hands.

Then of them one began. ”Whoe’er thou art,
Who journey’st thus this way, thy visage turn,
Think if me elsewhere thou hast ever seen.”

I tow’rds him turn’d, and with fix’d eye beheld.
Comely, and fair, and gentle of aspect,
He seem’d, but on one brow a gash was mark’d.

When humbly I disclaim'd to have beheld
Him ever: "Now behold!" he said, and show'd
High on his breast a wound: then smiling spake.

"I am Manfredi, grandson to the Queen
Costanza: whence I pray thee, when return'd,
To my fair daughter go, the parent glad
Of Aragonia and Sicilia's pride;
And of the truth inform her, if of me
Aught else be told. When by two mortal blows
My frame was shatter'd, I betook myself
Weeping to him, who of free will forgives.
My sins were horrible; but so wide arms
Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
All who turn to it. Had this text divine
Been of Cosenza's shepherd better scann'd,
Who then by Clement on my hunt was set,
Yet at the bridge's head my bones had lain,
Near Benevento, by the heavy mole
Protected; but the rain now drenches them,
And the wind drives, out of the kingdom's bounds,
Far as the stream of Verde, where, with lights
Extinguish'd, he remov'd them from their bed.
Yet by their curse we are not so destroy'd,
But that the eternal love may turn, while hope
Retains her verdant blossoms. True it is,
That such one as in contumacy dies
Against the holy church, though he repent,
Must wander thirty-fold for all the time
In his presumption past; if such decree
Be not by prayers of good men shorter made
Look therefore if thou canst advance my bliss;
Revealing to my good Costanza, how
Thou hast beheld me, and beside the terms
Laid on me of that interdict; for here
By means of those below much profit comes."

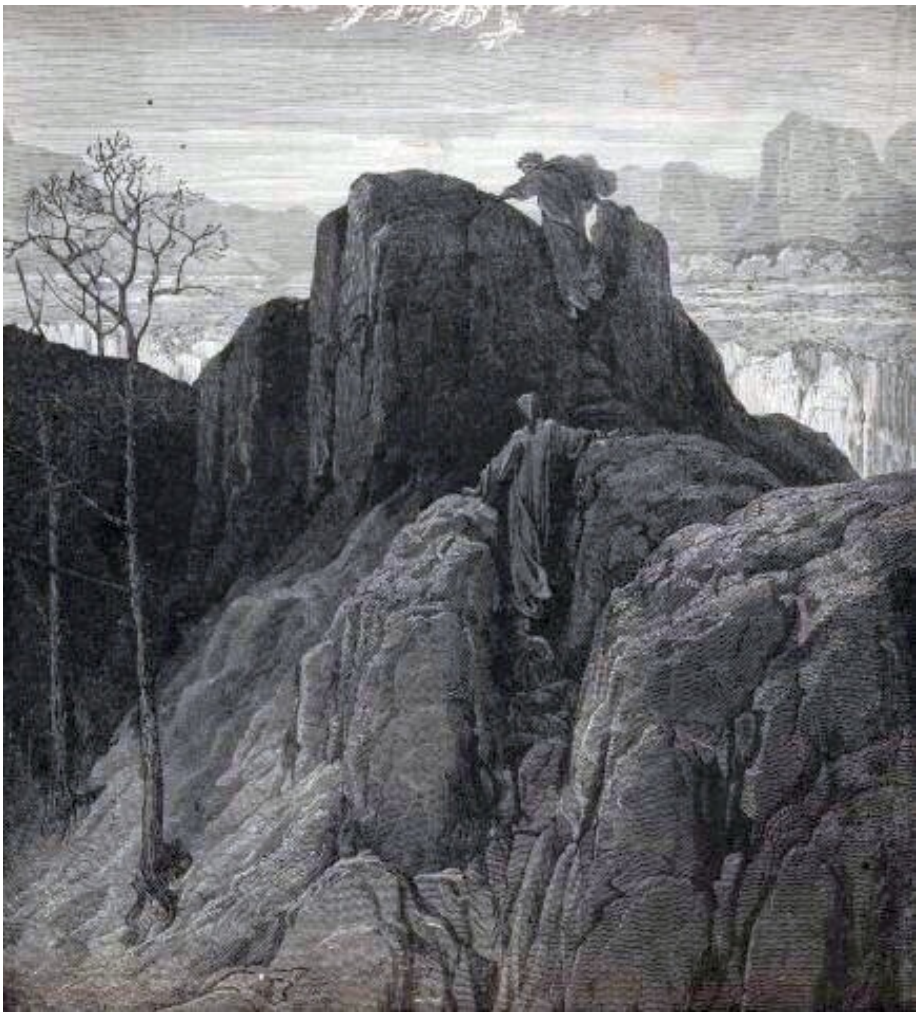
CANTO IV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

When by sensations of delight or pain,
That any of our faculties hath seiz'd,
Entire the soul collects herself, it seems
She is intent upon that power alone,
And thus the error is disprov'd which holds
The soul not singly lighted in the breast.
And therefore when as aught is heard or seen,
That firmly keeps the soul toward it turn'd,
Time passes, and a man perceives it not.
For that, whereby he hearken, is one power,
Another that, which the whole spirit hash;
This is as it were bound, while that is free.

This found I true by proof, hearing that spirit
And wond'ring; for full fifty steps aloft
The sun had measur'd unobserv'd of me,
When we arriv'd where all with one accord
The spirits shouted, "Here is what ye ask."

A larger aperture ofttimes is stopp'd
With forked stake of thorn by villager,
When the ripe grape imbrowns, than was the path,
By which my guide, and I behind him close,
Ascended solitary, when that troop
Departing left us. On Sanleo's road
Who journeys, or to Noli low descends,
Or mounts Bismantua's height, must use his feet;
But here a man had need to fly, I mean
With the swift wing and plumes of high desire,
Conducted by his aid, who gave me hope,
And with light furnish'd to direct my way.



We through the broken rock ascended, close
Pent on each side, while underneath the ground
Ask'd help of hands and feet. When we arriv'd
Near on the highest ridge of the steep bank,
Where the plain level open'd I exclaim'd,
"O master! say which way can we proceed?"

He answer'd, "Let no step of thine recede.
Behind me gain the mountain, till to us
Some practis'd guide appear." That eminence
Was lofty that no eye might reach its point,
And the side proudly rising, more than line
From the mid quadrant to the centre drawn.
I wearied thus began: "Parent belov'd!
Turn, and behold how I remain alone,

If thou stay not."— "My son!" He straight reply'd,
"Thus far put forth thy strength;" and to a track
Pointed, that, on this side projecting, round
Circles the hill. His words so spurr'd me on,
That I behind him clamb'ring, forc'd myself,
Till my feet press'd the circuit plain beneath.
There both together seated, turn'd we round
To eastward, whence was our ascent: and oft
Many beside have with delight look'd back.

First on the nether shores I turn'd my eyes,
Then rais'd them to the sun, and wond'ring mark'd
That from the left it smote us. Soon perceiv'd
That Poet sage now at the car of light
Amaz'd I stood, where 'twixt us and the north
Its course it enter'd. Whence he thus to me:
"Were Leda's offspring now in company
Of that broad mirror, that high up and low
Imparts his light beneath, thou might'st behold
The ruddy zodiac nearer to the bears
Wheel, if its ancient course it not forsook.
How that may be if thou would'st think; within
Pond'ring, imagine Sion with this mount
Plac'd on the earth, so that to both be one
Horizon, and two hemispheres apart,
Where lies the path that Phaeton ill knew
To guide his erring chariot: thou wilt see
How of necessity by this on one
He passes, while by that on the' other side,
If with clear view shine intellect attend."

"Of truth, kind teacher!" I exclaim'd, "so clear
Aught saw I never, as I now discern
Where seem'd my ken to fail, that the mid orb
Of the supernal motion (which in terms
Of art is called the Equator, and remains
Ever between the sun and winter) for the cause
Thou hast assign'd, from hence toward the north
Departs, when those who in the Hebrew land

Inhabit, see it tow'rds the warmer part.
But if it please thee, I would gladly know,
How far we have to journey: for the hill
Mounts higher, than this sight of mine can mount."

He thus to me: "Such is this steep ascent,
That it is ever difficult at first,
But, more a man proceeds, less evil grows.
When pleasant it shall seem to thee, so much
That upward going shall be easy to thee.
As in a vessel to go down the tide,
Then of this path thou wilt have reach'd the end.
There hope to rest thee from thy toil. No more
I answer, and thus far for certain know."
As he his words had spoken, near to us
A voice there sounded: "Yet ye first perchance
May to repose you by constraint be led."
At sound thereof each turn'd, and on the left
A huge stone we beheld, of which nor I
Nor he before was ware. Thither we drew,
find there were some, who in the shady place
Behind the rock were standing, as a man
Thru' idleness might stand. Among them one,
Who seem'd to me much wearied, sat him down,
And with his arms did fold his knees about,
Holding his face between them downward bent.

“Sweet Sir!” I cry’d, “behold that man, who shows
Himself more idle, than if laziness
Were sister to him.” Straight he turn’d to us,
And, o’er the thigh lifting his face, observ’d,
Then in these accents spake: “Up then, proceed
Thou valiant one.” Straight who it was I knew;
Nor could the pain I felt (for want of breath
Still somewhat urg’d me) hinder my approach.
And when I came to him, he scarce his head
Uplifted, saying “Well hast thou discern’d,
How from the left the sun his chariot leads.”

His lazy acts and broken words my lips
To laughter somewhat mov’d; when I began:
“Belacqua, now for thee I grieve no more.
But tell, why thou art seated upright there?

But tell, why thou art seated upright there?
Waitest thou escort to conduct thee hence?
Or blame I only shine accustom’d ways?”
Then he: “My brother, of what use to mount,
When to my suffering would not let me pass
The bird of God, who at the portal sits?
Behooves so long that heav’n first bear me round
Without its limits, as in life it bore,
Because I to the end repentant Sighs
Delay’d, if prayer do not aid me first,
That riseth up from heart which lives in grace.
What other kind avails, not heard in heaven?”’

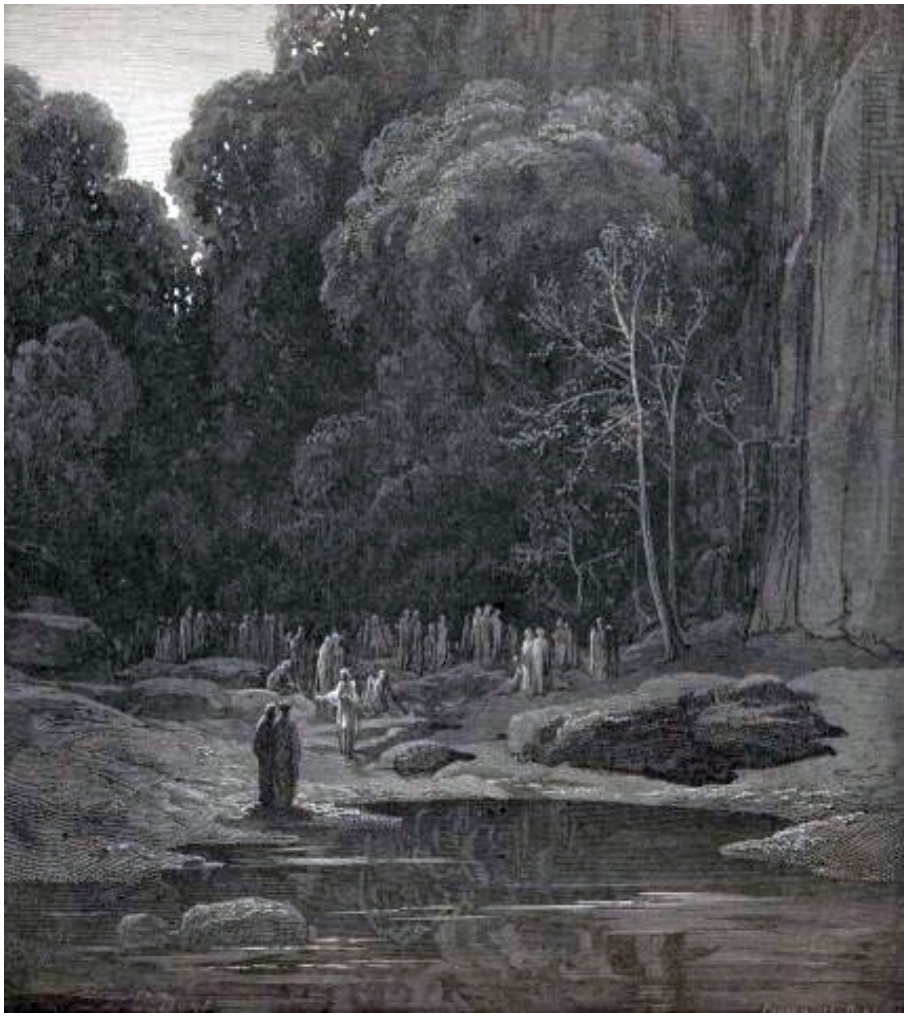
Before me now the Poet up the mount
Ascending, cried: “Haste thee, for see the sun
Has touch’d the point meridian, and the night
Now covers with her foot Marocco’s shore.”

CANTO V

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now had I left those spirits, and pursued
The steps of my Conductor, when beheld
Pointing the finger at me one exclaim'd:
"See how it seems as if the light not shone
From the left hand of him beneath, and he,
As living, seems to be led on." Mine eyes
I at that sound reverting, saw them gaze
Through wonder first at me, and then at me
And the light broken underneath, by turns.
"Why are thy thoughts thus riveted?" my guide
Exclaim'd, "that thou hast slack'd thy pace? or how
Imports it thee, what thing is whisper'd here?
Come after me, and to their babblings leave
The crowd. Be as a tower, that, firmly set,
Shakes not its top for any blast that blows!
He, in whose bosom thought on thought shoots out,
Still of his aim is wide, in that the one
Sicklies and wastes to nought the other's strength."
What other could I answer save "I come?"
I said it, somewhat with that colour ting'd
Which ofttimes pardon meriteth for man.
Meanwhile traverse along the hill there came,
A little way before us, some who sang
The "Miserere" in responsive Strains.
When they perceiv'd that through my body I
Gave way not for the rays to pass, their song
Straight to a long and hoarse exclaim they chang'd;
And two of them, in guise of messengers,
Ran on to meet us, and inquiring ask'd:
"Of your condition we would gladly learn."
To them my guide. "Ye may return, and bear
Tidings to them who sent you, that his frame
Is real flesh. If, as I deem, to view
His shade they paus'd, enough is answer'd them.

Him let them honour, they may prize him well.”
Ne’er saw I fiery vapours with such speed
Cut through the serene air at fall of night,
Nor August’s clouds athwart the setting sun,
That upward these did not in shorter space
Return; and, there arriving, with the rest
Wheel back on us, as with loose rein a troop.

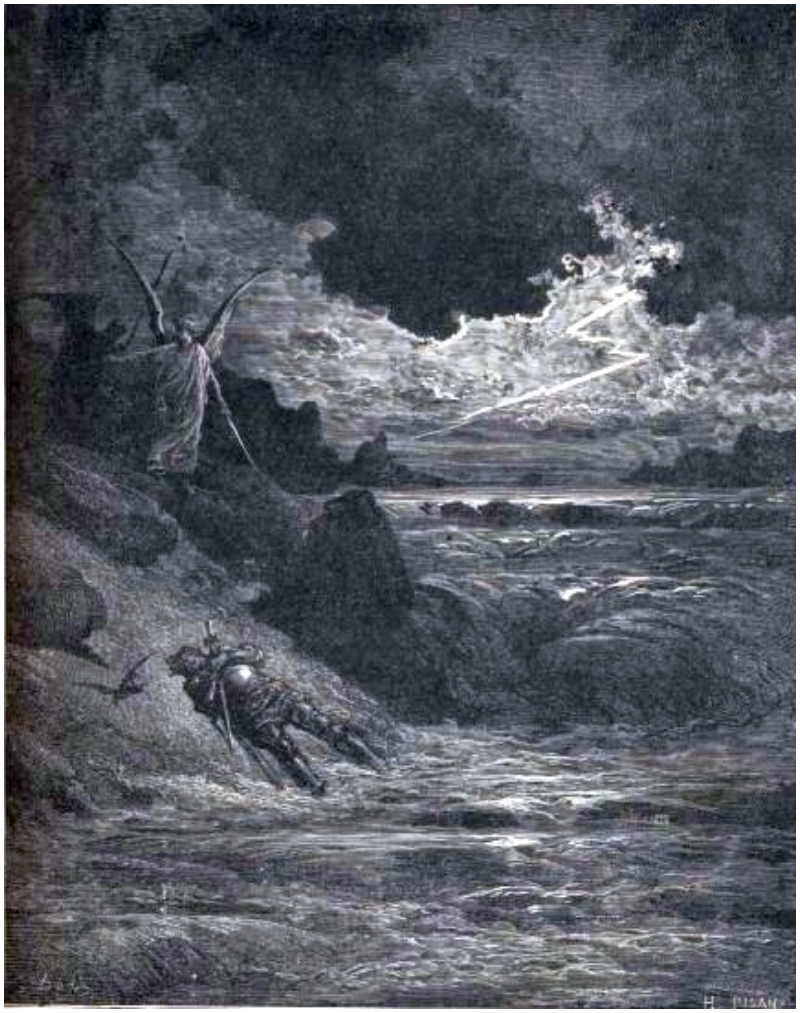


”Many,” exclaim’d the bard, “are these, who throng
Around us: to petition thee they come.
Go therefore on, and listen as thou go’st.”
”O spirit! who go’st on to blessedness
With the same limbs, that clad thee at thy birth.”
Shouting they came, “a little rest thy step.
Look if thou any one amongst our tribe

Hast e'er beheld, that tidings of him there
Thou mayst report. Ah, wherefore go'st thou on?
Ah wherefore tarriest thou not? We all
By violence died, and to our latest hour
Were sinners, but then warn'd by light from heav'n,
So that, repenting and forgiving, we
Did issue out of life at peace with God,
Who with desire to see him fills our heart."
Then I: "The visages of all I scan
Yet none of ye remember. But if aught,
That I can do, may please you, gentle spirits!
Speak; and I will perform it, by that peace,
Which on the steps of guide so excellent
Following from world to world intent I seek."
In answer he began: "None here distrusts
Thy kindness, though not promis'd with an oath;
So as the will fail not for want of power.
Whence I, who sole before the others speak,
Entreat thee, if thou ever see that land,
Which lies between Romagna and the realm
Of Charles, that of thy courtesy thou pray
Those who inhabit Fano, that for me
Their adorations duly be put up,
By which I may purge off my grievous sins.
From thence I came. But the deep passages,
Whence issued out the blood wherein I dwelt,
Upon my bosom in Antenor's land
Were made, where to be more secure I thought.
The author of the deed was Este's prince,
Who, more than right could warrant, with his wrath
Pursued me. Had I towards Mira fled,
When overta'en at Oriaco, still
Might I have breath'd. But to the marsh I sped,
And in the mire and rushes tangled there
Fell, and beheld my life-blood float the plain."
Then said another: "Ah! so may the wish,
That takes thee o'er the mountain, be fulfill'd,
As thou shalt graciously give aid to mine.
Of Montefeltro I; Buonconte I:

Giovanna nor none else have care for me,
Sorrowing with these I therefore go." I thus:
"From Campaldino's field what force or chance
Drew thee, that ne'er thy sepulture was known?"
"Oh!" answer'd he, "at Casentino's foot
A stream there courseth, nam'd Archiano, sprung
In Apennine above the Hermit's seat.
E'en where its name is cancel'd, there came I,
Pierc'd in the heart, fleeing away on foot,
And bloodying the plain. Here sight and speech
Fail'd me, and finishing with Mary's name
I fell, and tenantless my flesh remain'd.
I will report the truth; which thou again
Tell to the living. Me God's angel took,
Whilst he of hell exclaim'd: "O thou from heav'n!
Say wherefore hast thou robb'd me? Thou of him
Th' eternal portion bear'st with thee away
For one poor tear that he deprives me of.
But of the other, other rule I make."
"Thou knowest how in the atmosphere collects
That vapour dank, returning into water,
Soon as it mounts where cold condenses it.
That evil will, which in his intellect
Still follows evil, came, and rais'd the wind
And smoky mist, by virtue of the power
Given by his nature. Thence the valley, soon
As day was spent, he cover'd o'er with cloud
From Pratomagno to the mountain range,
And stretch'd the sky above, so that the air
Impregnate chang'd to water. Fell the rain,
And to the fosses came all that the land
Contain'd not; and, as mightiest streams are wont,
To the great river with such headlong sweep
Rush'd, that nought stay'd its course. My stiffen'd frame
Laid at his mouth the fell Archiano found,
And dash'd it into Arno, from my breast
Loos'ning the cross, that of myself I made
When overcome with pain. He hurl'd me on,

Along the banks and bottom of his course;
Then in his muddy spoils encircling wrapt.”



”Ah! when thou to the world shalt be return’d,
And rested after thy long road,” so spake
Next the third spirit; “then remember me.
I once was Pia. Sienna gave me life,
Maremma took it from me. That he knows,
Who me with jewell’d ring had first espous’d.”

CANTO VI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

When from their game of dice men separate,
He, who hath lost, remains in sadness fix'd,
Revolving in his mind, what luckless throws
He cast: but meanwhile all the company
Go with the other; one before him runs,
And one behind his mantle twitches, one
Fast by his side bids him remember him.
He stops not; and each one, to whom his hand
Is stretch'd, well knows he bids him stand aside;
And thus he from the press defends himself.
E'en such was I in that close-crowding throng;
And turning so my face around to all,
And promising, I 'scap'd from it with pains.
Here of Arezzo him I saw, who fell
By Ghino's cruel arm; and him beside,
Who in his chase was swallow'd by the stream.
Here Frederic Novello, with his hand
Stretch'd forth, entreated; and of Pisa he,
Who put the good Marzuco to such proof
Of constancy. Count Orso I beheld;
And from its frame a soul dismiss'd for spite
And envy, as it said, but for no crime:
I speak of Peter de la Brosse; and here,
While she yet lives, that Lady of Brabant
Let her beware; lest for so false a deed
She herd with worse than these. When I was freed
From all those spirits, who pray'd for others' prayers
To hasten on their state of blessedness;
Straight I began: "O thou, my luminary!
It seems expressly in thy text denied,
That heaven's supreme decree can never bend
To supplication; yet with this design
Do these entreat. Can then their hope be vain,
Or is thy saying not to me reveal'd?"

He thus to me: “Both what I write is plain,
And these deceiv’d not in their hope, if well
Thy mind consider, that the sacred height
Of judgment doth not stoop, because love’s flame
In a short moment all fulfils, which he
Who sojourns here, in right should satisfy.
Besides, when I this point concluded thus,
By praying no defect could be supplied;
Because the pray’r had none access to God.
Yet in this deep suspicion rest thou not
Contented unless she assure thee so,
Who betwixt truth and mind infuses light.
I know not if thou take me right; I mean
Beatrice. Her thou shalt behold above,
Upon this mountain’s crown, fair seat of joy.”
Then I: “Sir! let us mend our speed; for now
I tire not as before; and lo! the hill
Stretches its shadow far.” He answer’d thus:
“Our progress with this day shall be as much
As we may now dispatch; but otherwise
Than thou supposest is the truth. For there
Thou canst not be, ere thou once more behold
Him back returning, who behind the steep
Is now so hidden, that as erst his beam
Thou dost not break. But lo! a spirit there
Stands solitary, and toward us looks:
It will instruct us in the speediest way.”
We soon approach’d it. O thou Lombard spirit!
How didst thou stand, in high abstracted mood,
Scarce moving with slow dignity thine eyes!
It spoke not aught, but let us onward pass,
Eyeing us as a lion on his watch.
But Virgil with entreaty mild advanc’d,
Requesting it to show the best ascent.
It answer to his question none return’d,
But of our country and our kind of life
Demanded. When my courteous guide began,
“Mantua,” the solitary shadow quick
Rose towards us from the place in which it stood,

And cry'd, "Mantuan! I am thy countryman
Sordello." Each the other then embrac'd.
Ah slavish Italy! thou inn of grief,
Vessel without a pilot in loud storm,
Lady no longer of fair provinces,
But brothel-house impure! this gentle spirit,
Ev'n from the Pleasant sound of his dear land
Was prompt to greet a fellow citizen
With such glad cheer; while now thy living ones
In thee abide not without war; and one
Malicious gnaws another, ay of those
Whom the same wall and the same moat contains,
Seek, wretched one! around thy sea-coasts wide;
Then homeward to thy bosom turn, and mark
If any part of the sweet peace enjoy.
What boots it, that thy reins Justinian's hand
Befitted, if thy saddle be unpress'd?
Nought doth he now but aggravate thy shame.
Ah people! thou obedient still shouldst live,
And in the saddle let thy Caesar sit,
If well thou marked'st that which God commands.
Look how that beast to felness hath relaps'd
From having lost correction of the spur,
Since to the bridle thou hast set thine hand,
O German Albert! who abandon'st her,
That is grown savage and unmanageable,
When thou should'st clasp her flanks with forked heels.
Just judgment from the stars fall on thy blood!
And be it strange and manifest to all!
Such as may strike thy successor with dread!
For that thy sire and thou have suffer'd thus,
Through greediness of yonder realms detain'd,
The garden of the empire to run waste.
Come see the Capulets and Montagues,
The Philippeschi and Monaldi! man
Who car'st for nought! those sunk in grief, and these
With dire suspicion rack'd. Come, cruel one!
Come and behold the' oppression of the nobles,
And mark their injuries: and thou mayst see.

What safety Santafiore can supply.
Come and behold thy Rome, who calls on thee,
Desolate widow! day and night with moans:
“My Caesar, why dost thou desert my side?”
Come and behold what love among thy people:
And if no pity touches thee for us,
Come and blush for thine own report. For me,
If it be lawful, O Almighty Power,
Who wast in earth for our sakes crucified!
Are thy just eyes turn’d elsewhere? or is this
A preparation in the wond’rous depth
Of thy sage counsel made, for some good end,
Entirely from our reach of thought cut off?
So are the’ Italian cities all o’erthrong’d
With tyrants, and a great Marcellus made
Of every petty factious villager.
My Florence! thou mayst well remain unmov’d
At this digression, which affects not thee:
Thanks to thy people, who so wisely speed.
Many have justice in their heart, that long
Waiteth for counsel to direct the bow,
Or ere it dart unto its aim: but shine
Have it on their lip’s edge. Many refuse
To bear the common burdens: readier thine
Answer uneall’d, and cry, “Behold I stoop!”
Make thyself glad, for thou hast reason now,
Thou wealthy! thou at peace! thou wisdom-fraught!
Facts best witness if I speak the truth.
Athens and Lacedaemon, who of old
Enacted laws, for civil arts renown’d,
Made little progress in improving life
Tow’rds thee, who usest such nice subtlety,
That to the middle of November scarce
Reaches the thread thou in October weav’st.
How many times, within thy memory,
Customs, and laws, and coins, and offices
Have been by thee renew’d, and people chang’d!
If thou remember’st well and can’st see clear,
Thou wilt perceive thyself like a sick wretch,

Who finds no rest upon her down, but oft
Shifting her side, short respite seeks from pain.

CANTO VII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

After their courteous greetings joyfully
Sev'n times exchang'd, Sordello backward drew
Exclaiming, "Who are ye?" "Before this mount
By spirits worthy of ascent to God
Was sought, my bones had by Octavius' care
Been buried. I am Virgil, for no sin
Depriv'd of heav'n, except for lack of faith."
So answer'd him in few my gentle guide.
As one, who aught before him suddenly
Beholding, whence his wonder riseth, cries
"It is yet is not," wav'ring in belief;
Such he appear'd; then downward bent his eyes,
And drawing near with reverential step,
Caught him, where of mean estate might clasp
His lord. "Glory of Latium!" he exclaim'd,
"In whom our tongue its utmost power display'd!
Boast of my honor'd birth-place! what desert
Of mine, what favour rather undeserv'd,
Shows thee to me? If I to hear that voice
Am worthy, say if from below thou com'st
And from what cloister's pale?"— "Through every orb
Of that sad region," he reply'd, "thus far
Am I arriv'd, by heav'nly influence led
And with such aid I come. There is a place
There underneath, not made by torments sad,
But by dun shades alone; where mourning's voice
Sounds not of anguish sharp, but breathes in sighs."

There I with little innocents abide,
Who by death's fangs were bitten, ere exempt
From human taint. There I with those abide,
Who the three holy virtues put not on,
But understood the rest, and without blame
Follow'd them all. But if thou know'st and canst,
Direct us, how we soonest may arrive,
Where Purgatory its true beginning takes."
He answer'd thus: "We have no certain place
Assign'd us: upwards I may go or round,
Far as I can, I join thee for thy guide.
But thou beholdest now how day declines:
And upwards to proceed by night, our power
Excels: therefore it may be well to choose
A place of pleasant sojourn. To the right

Some spirits sit apart retir'd. If thou
Consentest, I to these will lead thy steps:
And thou wilt know them, not without delight."
"How chances this?" was answer'd; "who so wish'd
To ascend by night, would he be thence debarr'd
By other, or through his own weakness fail?"
The good Sordello then, along the ground
Trailing his finger, spoke: "Only this line
Thou shalt not overpass, soon as the sun
Hath disappear'd; not that aught else impedes
Thy going upwards, save the shades of night.
These with the wont of power perplex the will.
With them thou haply mightst return beneath,
Or to and fro around the mountain's side
Wander, while day is in the horizon shut."
My master straight, as wond'ring at his speech,
Exclaim'd: "Then lead us quickly, where thou sayst,
That, while we stay, we may enjoy delight."
A little space we were remov'd from thence,
When I perceiv'd the mountain hollow'd out.
Ev'n as large valleys hollow'd out on earth,
"That way," the' escorting spirit cried, "we go,
Where in a bosom the high bank recedes:
And thou await renewal of the day."
Betwixt the steep and plain a crooked path
Led us traverse into the ridge's side,
Where more than half the sloping edge expires.
Refulgent gold, and silver thrice refin'd,
And scarlet grain and ceruse, Indian wood
Of lucid dye serene, fresh emeralds
But newly broken, by the herbs and flowers
Plac'd in that fair recess, in color all
Had been surpass'd, as great surpasses less.
Nor nature only there lavish'd her hues,
But of the sweetness of a thousand smells
A rare and undistinguish'd fragrance made.

”Salve Regina,” on the grass and flowers
Here chanting I beheld those spirits sit
Who not beyond the valley could be seen.
”Before the west’ring sun sink to his bed,”
Began the Mantuan, who our steps had turn’d,
”’Mid those desires not that I lead ye on.
For from this eminence ye shall discern
Better the acts and visages of all,
Than in the nether vale among them mix’d.
He, who sits high above the rest, and seems
To have neglected that he should have done,
And to the others’ song moves not his lip,
The Emperor Rodolph call, who might have heal’d
The wounds whereof fair Italy hath died,
So that by others she revives but slowly,

He, who with kindly visage comforts him,
Sway'd in that country, where the water springs,
That Moldaw's river to the Elbe, and Elbe
Rolls to the ocean: Ottocar his name:
Who in his swaddling clothes was of more worth
Than Winceslaus his son, a bearded man,
Pamper'd with rank luxuriousness and ease.
And that one with the nose depress, who close
In counsel seems with him of gentle look,
Flying expir'd, with'ring the lily's flower.
Look there how he doth knock against his breast!
The other ye behold, who for his cheek
Makes of one hand a couch, with frequent sighs.
They are the father and the father-in-law
Of Gallia's bane: his vicious life they know
And foul; thence comes the grief that rends them thus.
"He, so robust of limb, who measure keeps
In song, with him of feature prominent,
With ev'ry virtue bore his girdle brac'd.
And if that stripling who behinds him sits,
King after him had liv'd, his virtue then
From vessel to like vessel had been pour'd;
Which may not of the other heirs be said.
By James and Frederick his realms are held;
Neither the better heritage obtains.
Rarely into the branches of the tree
Doth human worth mount up; and so ordains
He who bestows it, that as his free gift
It may be call'd. To Charles my words apply
No less than to his brother in the song;
Which Pouille and Provence now with grief confess.
So much that plant degenerates from its seed,
As more than Beatrice and Margaret
Costanza still boasts of her valorous spouse.
"Behold the king of simple life and plain,
Harry of England, sitting there alone:
He through his branches better issue spreads.
"That one, who on the ground beneath the rest
Sits lowest, yet his gaze directs aloft,

Us William, that brave Marquis, for whose cause
The deed of Alexandria and his war
Makes Conferrat and Canavese weep.”

CANTO VIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now was the hour that wakens fond desire
In men at sea, and melts their thoughtful heart,
Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell,
And pilgrim newly on his road with love
Thrills, if he hear the vesper bell from far,
That seems to mourn for the expiring day:
When I, no longer taking heed to hear
Began, with wonder, from those spirits to mark
One risen from its seat, which with its hand
Audience implor'd. Both palms it join'd and rais'd,
Fixing its steadfast gaze towards the east,
As telling God, "I care for naught beside."
"Te Lucis Ante," so devoutly then
Came from its lip, and in so soft a strain,
That all my sense in ravishment was lost.
And the rest after, softly and devout,
Follow'd through all the hymn, with upward gaze
Directed to the bright supernal wheels.
Here, reader! for the truth makes thine eyes keen:
For of so subtle texture is this veil,
That thou with ease mayst pass it through unmark'd.
I saw that gentle band silently next
Look up, as if in expectation held,
Pale and in lowly guise; and from on high
I saw forth issuing descend beneath
Two angels with two flame-illumin'd swords,
Broken and mutilated at their points.
Green as the tender leaves but newly born,
Their vesture was, the which by wings as green
Beaten, they drew behind them, fann'd in air.
A little over us one took his stand,
The other lighted on the' Opposing hill,
So that the troop were in the midst contain'd.
Well I descried the whiteness on their heads;

But in their visages the dazzled eye
Was lost, as faculty that by too much
Is overpower'd. "From Mary's bosom both
Are come," exclaim'd Sordello, "as a guard
Over the vale, ganst him, who hither tends,
The serpent." Whence, not knowing by which path
He came, I turn'd me round, and closely press'd,
All frozen, to my leader's trusted side.
Sordello paus'd not: "To the valley now
(For it is time) let us descend; and hold
Converse with those great shadows: haply much
Their sight may please ye." Only three steps down
Methinks I measur'd, ere I was beneath,
And noted one who look'd as with desire
To know me. Time was now that air arrow dim;
Yet not so dim, that 'twixt his eyes and mine
It clear'd not up what was conceal'd before.
Mutually tow'rds each other we advanc'd.
Nino, thou courteous judge! what joy I felt,
When I perceiv'd thou wert not with the bad!
No salutation kind on either part
Was left unsaid. He then inquir'd: "How long
Since thou arrived'st at the mountain's foot,
Over the distant waves?"— "O!" answer'd I,
"Through the sad seats of woe this morn I came,
And still in my first life, thus journeying on,
The other strive to gain." Soon as they heard
My words, he and Sordello backward drew,
As suddenly amaz'd. To Virgil one,
The other to a spirit turn'd, who near
Was seated, crying: "Conrad! up with speed:
Come, see what of his grace high God hath will'd."
Then turning round to me: "By that rare mark
Of honour which thou ow'st to him, who hides
So deeply his first cause, it hath no ford,
When thou shalt be beyond the vast of waves.
Tell my Giovanna, that for me she call
There, where reply to innocence is made.
Her mother, I believe, loves me no more;

Since she has chang'd the white and wimpled folds,
Which she is doom'd once more with grief to wish.
By her it easily may be perceiv'd,
How long in women lasts the flame of love,
If sight and touch do not relume it oft.
For her so fair a burial will not make
The viper which calls Milan to the field,
As had been made by shrill Gallura's bird."
He spoke, and in his visage took the stamp
Of that right seal, which with due temperature
Glows in the bosom. My insatiate eyes
Meanwhile to heav'n had travel'd, even there
Where the bright stars are slowest, as a wheel
Nearest the axle; when my guide inquir'd:
"What there aloft, my son, has caught thy gaze?"
I answer'd: "The three torches, with which here
The pole is all on fire." He then to me:
"The four resplendent stars, thou saw'st this morn
Are there beneath, and these ris'n in their stead."
While yet he spoke. Sordello to himself
Drew him, and cry'd: "Lo there our enemy!"
And with his hand pointed that way to look.
Along the side, where barrier none arose
Around the little vale, a serpent lay,
Such haply as gave Eve the bitter food.
Between the grass and flowers, the evil snake
Came on, reverting oft his lifted head;
And, as a beast that smoothes its polish'd coat,
Licking his hack. I saw not, nor can tell,
How those celestial falcons from their seat
Mov'd, but in motion each one well descried,
Hearing the air cut by their verdant plumes.
The serpent fled; and to their stations back
The angels up return'd with equal flight.

The Spirit (who to Nino, when he call’d,
Had come), from viewing me with fixed ken,
Through all that conflict, loosen’d not his sight.
”So may the lamp, which leads thee up on high,
Find, in thy destin’d lot, of wax so much,
As may suffice thee to the enamel’s height.”
It thus began: “If any certain news
Of Valdimagra and the neighbour part
Thou know’st, tell me, who once was mighty there
They call’d me Conrad Malaspina, not
That old one, but from him I sprang. The love
I bore my people is now here refin’d.”
”In your dominions,” I answer’d, “ne’er was I.
But through all Europe where do those men dwell,
To whom their glory is not manifest?

The fame, that honours your illustrious house,
Proclaims the nobles and proclaims the land;
So that he knows it who was never there.
I swear to you, so may my upward route
Prosper! your honour'd nation not impairs
The value of her coffer and her sword.
Nature and use give her such privilege,
That while the world is twisted from his course
By a bad head, she only walks aright,
And has the evil way in scorn." He then:
"Now pass thee on: sev'n times the tired sun
Revisits not the couch, which with four feet
The forked Aries covers, ere that kind
Opinion shall be nail'd into thy brain
With stronger nails than other's speech can drive,
If the sure course of judgment be not stay'd."

CANTO IX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now the fair consort of Tithonus old,
Arisen from her mate's beloved arms,
Look'd palely o'er the eastern cliff: her brow,
Lucent with jewels, glitter'd, set in sign
Of that chill animal, who with his train
Smites fearful nations: and where then we were,
Two steps of her ascent the night had past,
And now the third was closing up its wing,
When I, who had so much of Adam with me,
Sank down upon the grass, o'ercome with sleep,
There where all five were seated. In that hour,

When near the dawn the swallow her sad lay,
Rememb'ring haply ancient grief, renews,
And with our minds more wand'rers from the flesh,
And less by thought restrain'd are, as 't were, full
Of holy divination in their dreams,
Then in a vision did I seem to view
A golden-feather'd eagle in the sky,
With open wings, and hov'ring for descent,
And I was in that place, methought, from whence
Young Ganymede, from his associates 'reft,
Was snatch'd aloft to the high consistory.
"Perhaps," thought I within me, "here alone
He strikes his quarry, and elsewhere disdains
To pounce upon the prey." Therewith, it seem'd,
A little wheeling in his airy tour
Terrible as the lightning rush'd he down,
And snatch'd me upward even to the fire.

There both, I thought, the eagle and myself
Did burn; and so intense th' imagin'd flames,
That needs my sleep was broken off. As erst
Achilles shook himself, and round him roll'd
His waken'd eyeballs wond'ring where he was,
Whenas his mother had from Chiron fled
To Scyros, with him sleeping in her arms;
E'en thus I shook me, soon as from my face
The slumber parted, turning deadly pale,
Like one ice-struck with dread. Solo at my side
My comfort stood: and the bright sun was now
More than two hours aloft: and to the sea
My looks were turn'd. "Fear not," my master cried,
"Assur'd we are at happy point. Thy strength
Shrink not, but rise dilated. Thou art come

To Purgatory now. Lo! there the cliff
That circling bounds it! Lo! the entrance there,
Where it doth seem disparted! Ere the dawn
Usher'd the daylight, when thy wearied soul
Slept in thee, o'er the flowery vale beneath
A lady came, and thus bespake me: I
Am Lucia. Suffer me to take this man,
Who slumbers. Easier so his way shall speed."
Sordello and the other gentle shapes
Tarrying, she bare thee up: and, as day shone,
This summit reach'd: and I pursued her steps.
Here did she place thee. First her lovely eyes
That open entrance show'd me; then at once
She vanish'd with thy sleep." Like one, whose doubts
Are chas'd by certainty, and terror turn'd
To comfort on discovery of the truth,
Such was the change in me: and as my guide
Beheld me fearless, up along the cliff
He mov'd, and I behind him, towards the height.
    Reader! thou markest how my theme doth rise,
Nor wonder therefore, if more artfully
I prop the structure! Nearer now we drew,
Arriv'd' whence in that part, where first a breach
As of a wall appear'd, I could descry
A portal, and three steps beneath, that led
For inlet there, of different colour each,
And one who watch'd, but spake not yet a word.
As more and more mine eye did stretch its view,
I mark'd him seated on the highest step,
In visage such, as past my power to bear.

Grasp’d in his hand a naked sword, glanc’d back
The rays so toward me, that I oft in vain
My sight directed. ”Speak from whence ye stand:”
He cried: “What would ye? Where is your escort?
Take heed your coming upward harm ye not.”
    ”A heavenly dame, not skilless of these things,”
Replied the’ instructor, “told us, even now,
‘Pass that way: here the gate is.”— “And may she
Befriending prosper your ascent,” resum’d
The courteous keeper of the gate: “Come then
Before our steps.” We straightway thither came.
    The lowest stair was marble white so smooth
And polish’d, that therein my mirror’d form
Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark
Than sablest grain, a rough and singed block,

Crack'd lengthwise and across. The third, that lay
Massy above, seem'd porphyry, that flam'd
Red as the life-blood spouting from a vein.
On this God's angel either foot sustain'd,
Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd
A rock of diamond. Up the trinal steps
My leader cheerily drew me. "Ask," said he,
"With humble heart, that he unbar the bolt."
Piously at his holy feet devolv'd
I cast me, praying him for pity's sake
That he would open to me: but first fell
Thrice on my bosom prostrate. Seven times
The letter, that denotes the inward stain,
He on my forehead with the blunted point
Of his drawn sword inscrib'd. And "Look," he cried,
"When enter'd, that thou wash these scars away."
Ashes, or earth ta'en dry out of the ground,
Were of one colour with the robe he wore.
From underneath that vestment forth he drew
Two keys of metal twain: the one was gold,
Its fellow silver. With the pallid first,
And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,
As to content me well. "Whenever one
Faileth of these, that in the keyhole straight
It turn not, to this alley then expect
Access in vain." Such were the words he spake.
"One is more precious: but the other needs
Skill and sagacity, large share of each,
Ere its good task to disengage the knot
Be worthily perform'd. From Peter these
I hold, of him instructed, that I err
Rather in opening than in keeping fast;
So but the suppliant at my feet implore."
Then of that hallow'd gate he thrust the door,
Exclaiming, "Enter, but this warning hear:
He forth again departs who looks behind."
As in the hinges of that sacred ward
The swivels turn'd, sonorous metal strong,
Harsh was the grating; nor so surlily

Roar’d the Tarpeian, when by force bereft
Of good Metellus, thenceforth from his loss
To leanness doom’d. Attentively I turn’d,
List’ning the thunder, that first issued forth;
And “We praise thee, O God,” methought I heard
In accents blended with sweet melody.
The strains came o’er mine ear, e’en as the sound
Of choral voices, that in solemn chant
With organ mingle, and, now high and clear,
Come swelling, now float indistinct away.

CANTO X

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

When we had passed the threshold of the gate
(Which the soul's ill affection doth disuse,
Making the crooked seem the straighter path),
I heard its closing sound. Had mine eyes turn'd,
For that offence what plea might have avail'd?
We mounted up the riven rock, that wound
On either side alternate, as the wave
Flies and advances. "Here some little art
Behooves us," said my leader, "that our steps
Observe the varying flexure of the path."
Thus we so slowly sped, that with cleft orb
The moon once more o'erhangs her wat'ry couch,
Ere we that strait have threaded. But when free
We came and open, where the mount above
One solid mass retires, I spent, with toil,
And both, uncertain of the way, we stood,
Upon a plain more lonesome, than the roads
That traverse desert wilds. From whence the brink
Borders upon vacuity, to foot
Of the steep bank, that rises still, the space
Had measur'd thrice the stature of a man:
And, distant as mine eye could wing its flight,
To leftward now and now to right dispatch'd,
That cornice equal in extent appear'd.
Not yet our feet had on that summit mov'd,
When I discover'd that the bank around,
Whose proud uprising all ascent denied,
Was marble white, and so exactly wrought
With quaintest sculpture, that not there alone
Had Polycletus, but e'en nature's self
Been sham'd. The angel who came down to earth
With tidings of the peace so many years
Wept for in vain, that op'd the heavenly gates
From their long interdict before us seem'd,

In a sweet act, so sculptur'd to the life,
He look'd no silent image. One had sworn
He had said, "Hail!" for she was imag'd there,
By whom the key did open to God's love,
And in her act as sensibly impress
That word, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord,"
As figure seal'd on wax. "Fix not thy mind
On one place only," said the guide belov'd,
Who had me near him on that part where lies
The heart of man. My sight forthwith I turn'd
And mark'd, behind the virgin mother's form,
Upon that side, where he, that mov'd me, stood,
Another story graven on the rock.
I passed athwart the bard, and drew me near,
That it might stand more aptly for my view.
There in the self-same marble were engrav'd
The cart and kine, drawing the sacred ark,
That from unbidden office awes mankind.
Before it came much people; and the whole
Parted in seven quires. One sense cried, "Nay,"
Another, "Yes, they sing." Like doubt arose
Betwixt the eye and smell, from the curl'd fume
Of incense breathing up the well-wrought toil.
Preceding the blest vessel, onward came
With light dance leaping, girt in humble guise,
Sweet Israel's harper: in that hap he seem'd
Less and yet more than kingly. Opposite,
At a great palace, from the lattice forth
Look'd Michol, like a lady full of scorn
And sorrow. To behold the tablet next,
Which at the hack of Michol whitely shone,
I mov'd me. There was storied on the rock
The' exalted glory of the Roman prince,
Whose mighty worth mov'd Gregory to earn
His mighty conquest, Trajan th' Emperor.
A widow at his bridle stood, attir'd
In tears and mourning. Round about them troop'd
Full throng of knights, and overhead in gold
The eagles floated, struggling with the wind.

The wretch appear’d amid all these to say:
“Grant vengeance, sire! for, woe beshrew this heart
My son is murder’d.” He replying seem’d;
”Wait now till I return.” And she, as one
Made hasty by her grief; “O sire, if thou
Dost not return?”— “Where I am, who then is,
May right thee.”— “What to thee is other’s good,
If thou neglect thy own?”— “Now comfort thee,”
At length he answers. ”It beseemeth well
My duty be perform’d, ere I move hence:
So justice wills; and pity bids me stay.”
He, whose ken nothing new surveys, produc’d
That visible speaking, new to us and strange
The like not found on earth. Fondly I gaz’d
Upon those patterns of meek humbleness,

Shapes yet more precious for their artist's sake,
When "Lo," the poet whisper'd, "where this way
(But slack their pace), a multitude advance.
These to the lofty steps shall guide us on."
    Mine eyes, though bent on view of novel sights
Their lov'd allurement, were not slow to turn.
    Reader! I would not that amaz'd thou miss
Of thy good purpose, hearing how just God
Decrees our debts be cancel'd. Ponder not
The form of suff'ring. Think on what succeeds,
Think that at worst beyond the mighty doom
It cannot pass. "Instructor," I began,
"What I see hither tending, bears no trace
Of human semblance, nor of aught beside
That my foil'd sight can guess." He answering thus:
"So courb'd to earth, beneath their heavy teems
Of torment stoop they, that mine eye at first
Struggled as thine. But look intently thither,
An disentangle with thy lab'ring view,
What underneath those stones approacheth: now,
E'en now, mayst thou discern the pangs of each."
    Christians and proud! O poor and wretched ones!
That feeble in the mind's eye, lean your trust
Upon unstaid perverseness! Know ye not
That we are worms, yet made at last to form
The winged insect, imp'd with angel plumes
That to heaven's justice unobstructed soars?
Why buoy ye up aloft your unfleg'd souls?
Abortive then and shapeless ye remain,
Like the untimely embryon of a worm!
    As, to support incumbent floor or roof,
For corbel is a figure sometimes seen,
That crumples up its knees unto its breast,
With the feign'd posture stirring ruth unfeign'd
In the beholder's fancy; so I saw
These fashion'd, when I noted well their guise.
    Each, as his back was laden, came indeed
Or more or less contract; but it appear'd

As he, who show’d most patience in his look,
Wailing exclaim’d: “I can endure no more.”

CANTO XI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"O thou Almighty Father, who dost make
The heavens thy dwelling, not in bounds confin'd,
But that with love intenser there thou view'st
Thy primal effluence, hallow'd be thy name:
Join each created being to extol
Thy might, for worthy humblest thanks and praise
Is thy blest Spirit. May thy kingdom's peace
Come unto us; for we, unless it come,
With all our striving thither tend in vain.
As of their will the angels unto thee
Tender meet sacrifice, circling thy throne
With loud hosannas, so of theirs be done
By saintly men on earth. Grant us this day
Our daily manna, without which he roams
Through this rough desert retrograde, who most
Toils to advance his steps. As we to each
Pardon the evil done us, pardon thou
Benign, and of our merit take no count.
'Gainst the old adversary prove thou not
Our virtue easily subdu'd; but free
From his incitements and defeat his wiles.
This last petition, dearest Lord! is made
Not for ourselves, since that were needless now,
But for their sakes who after us remain."

Thus for themselves and us good speed imploring,
Those spirits went beneath a weight like that
We sometimes feel in dreams, all, sore beset,
But with unequal anguish, wearied all,
Round the first circuit, purging as they go,
The world's gross darkness off: In our behalf
If there vows still be offer'd, what can here
For them be vow'd and done by such, whose wills
Have root of goodness in them? Well beseems

That we should help them wash away the stains
They carried hence, that so made pure and light,
They may spring upward to the starry spheres.

“Ah! so may mercy-temper’d justice rid
Your burdens speedily, that ye have power
To stretch your wing, which e’en to your desire
Shall lift you, as ye show us on which hand
Toward the ladder leads the shortest way.
And if there be more passages than one,
Instruct us of that easiest to ascend;
For this man who comes with me, and bears yet
The charge of fleshly raiment Adam left him,
Despite his better will but slowly mounts.”
From whom the answer came unto these words,
Which my guide spake, appear’d not; but ’twas said.

“Along the bank to rightward come with us,
And ye shall find a pass that mocks not toil
Of living man to climb: and were it not
That I am hinder’d by the rock, wherewith
This arrogant neck is tam’d, whence needs I stoop
My visage to the ground, him, who yet lives,
Whose name thou speak’st not him I fain would view.
To mark if e’er I knew him? and to crave
His pity for the fardel that I bear.
I was of Latiun, of a Tuscan horn
A mighty one: Aldobranlesco’s name
My sire’s, I know not if ye e’er have heard.
My old blood and forefathers’ gallant deeds
Made me so haughty, that I clean forgot
The common mother, and to such excess,
Wax’d in my scorn of all men, that I fell,
Fell therefore; by what fate Sienna’s sons,
Each child in Campagnatico, can tell.
I am Omberto; not me only pride
Hath injur’d, but my kindred all involv’d
In mischief with her. Here my lot ordains
Under this weight to groan, till I appease

God’s angry justice, since I did it not
Amongst the living, here amongst the dead.”

List’ning I bent my visage down: and one
(Not he who spake) twisted beneath the weight
That urg’d him, saw me, knew me straight, and call’d,
Holding his eyes With difficulty fix’d
Intent upon me, stooping as I went
Companion of their way. ”O!” I exclaim’d,

“Art thou not Oderigi, art not thou
Agobbio’s glory, glory of that art
Which they of Paris call the limmer’s skill?”

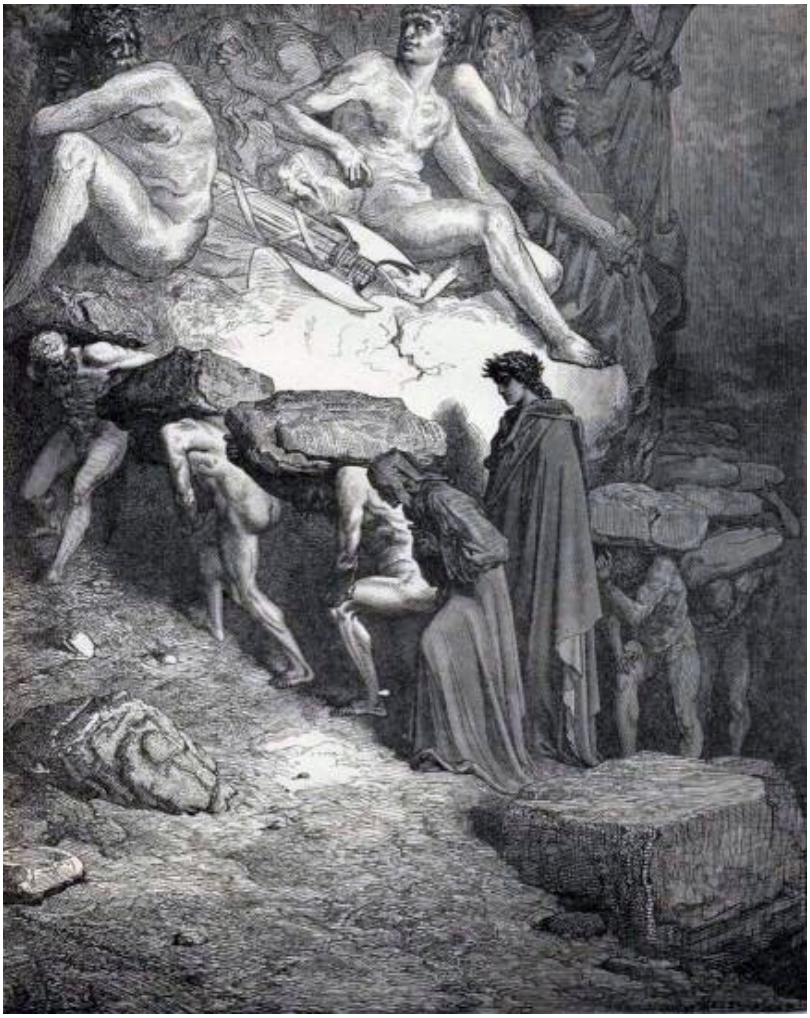
“Brother!” said he, “with tints that gayer smile,
Bolognian Franco’s pencil lines the leaves.
His all the honour now; mine borrow’d light.
In truth I had not been thus courteous to him,
The whilst I liv’d, through eagerness of zeal
For that pre-eminence my heart was bent on.
Here of such pride the forfeiture is paid.
Nor were I even here; if, able still
To sin, I had not turn’d me unto God.
O powers of man! how vain your glory, nipp’d
E’en in its height of verdure, if an age
Less bright succeed not! Cimabue thought
To lord it over painting’s field; and now
The cry is Giotto’s, and his name eclips’d.
Thus hath one Guido from the other snatch’d
The letter’d prize: and he perhaps is born,
Who shall drive either from their nest. The noise
Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind,
That blows from divers points, and shifts its name
Shifting the point it blows from. Shalt thou more
Live in the mouths of mankind, if thy flesh
Part shrivel’d from thee, than if thou hadst died,
Before the coral and the pap were left,
Or ere some thousand years have passed? and that
Is, to eternity compar’d, a space,

Briefer than is the twinkling of an eye
To the heaven's slowest orb. He there who treads
So leisurely before me, far and wide
Through Tuscany resounded once; and now
Is in Sienna scarce with whispers nam'd:
There was he sov'reign, when destruction caught
The madd'ning rage of Florence, in that day
Proud as she now is loathsome. Your renown
Is as the herb, whose hue doth come and go,
And his might withers it, by whom it sprang
Crude from the lap of earth." I thus to him:
"True are thy sayings: to my heart they breathe
The kindly spirit of meekness, and allay
What tumours rankle there. But who is he
Of whom thou spak'st but now?"— "This," he replied,
"Is Provenzano. He is here, because
He reach'd, with grasp presumptuous, at the sway
Of all Sienna. Thus he still hath gone,
Thus goeth never-resting, since he died.
Such is th' acquittance render'd back of him,
Who, beyond measure, dar'd on earth." I then:
"If soul that to the verge of life delays
Repentance, linger in that lower space,
Nor hither mount, unless good prayers befriend,
How chanc'd admittance was vouchsaf'd to him?"

"When at his glory's topmost height," said he,
"Respect of dignity all cast aside,
Freely He fix'd him on Sienna's plain,
A suitor to redeem his suff'ring friend,
Who languish'd in the prison-house of Charles,
Nor for his sake refus'd through every vein
To tremble. More I will not say; and dark,
I know, my words are, but thy neighbours soon
Shall help thee to a comment on the text.
This is the work, that from these limits freed him."

CANTO XII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'



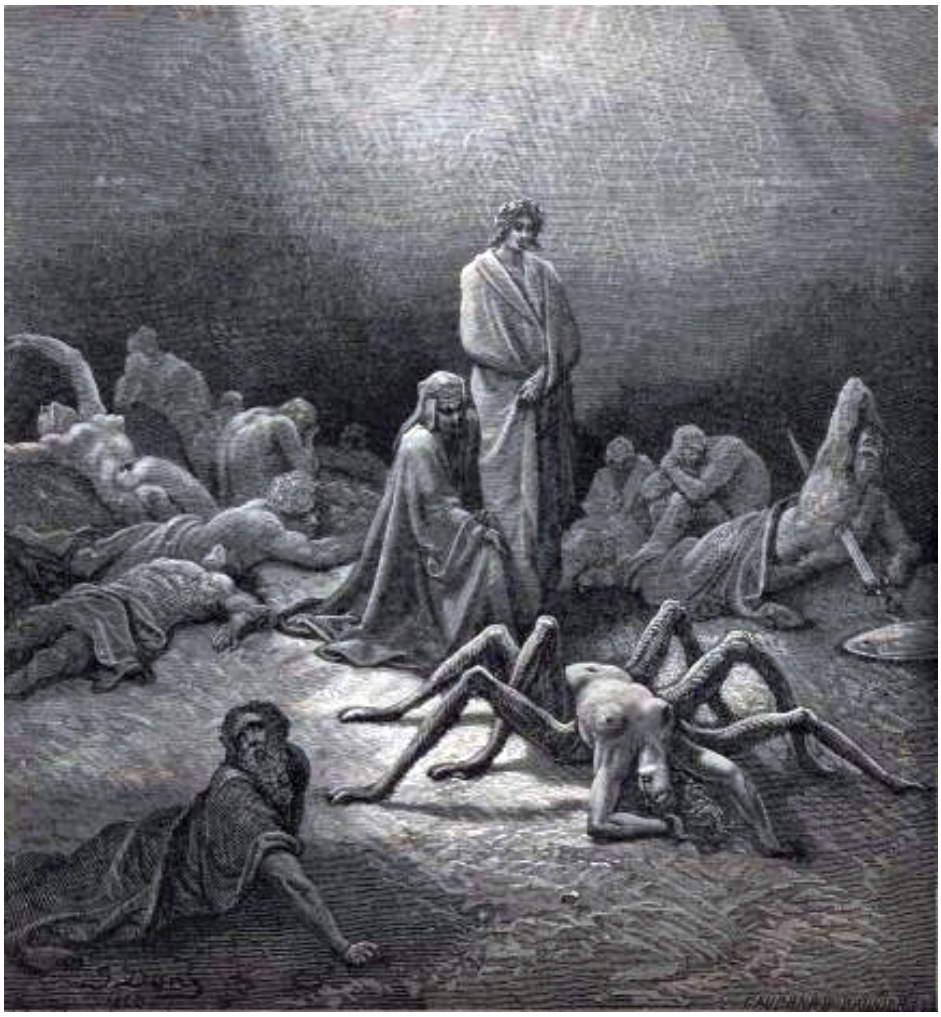
With equal pace as oxen in the yoke,
I with that laden spirit journey'd on
Long as the mild instructor suffer'd me;
But when he bade me quit him, and proceed
(For "here," said he, "behooves with sail and oars
Each man, as best he may, push on his bark"),
Upright, as one dispos'd for speed, I rais'd
My body, still in thought submissive bow'd.

I now my leader's track not loth pursued;
And each had shown how light we far'd along

When thus he warn’d me: “Bend thine eyesight down:
For thou to ease the way shall find it good
To ruminate the bed beneath thy feet.”

As in memorial of the buried, drawn
Upon earth-level tombs, the sculptur’d form
Of what was once, appears (at sight whereof
Tears often stream forth by remembrance wak’d,
Whose sacred stings the piteous only feel),
So saw I there, but with more curious skill
Of portraiture o’erwrought, whate’er of space
From forth the mountain stretches. On one part
Him I beheld, above all creatures erst
Created noblest, light’ning fall from heaven:
On th’ other side with bolt celestial pierc’d
Briareus: cumb’ring earth he lay through dint
Of mortal ice-stroke. The Thymbraean god
With Mars, I saw, and Pallas, round their sire,
Arm’d still, and gazing on the giant’s limbs
Strewn o’er th’ ethereal field. Nimrod I saw:
At foot of the stupendous work he stood,
As if bewilder’d, looking on the crowd
Leagued in his proud attempt on Sennaar’s plain.

O Niobe! in what a trance of woe
Thee I beheld, upon that highway drawn,
Sev’n sons on either side thee slain! O Saul!
How ghastly didst thou look! on thine own sword
Expiring in Gilboa, from that hour
Ne’er visited with rain from heav’n or dew!



O fond Arachne! thee I also saw
Half spider now in anguish crawling up
Th’ unfinish’d web thou weaved’st to thy bane!

O Rehoboam! here thy shape doth seem
Louring no more defiance! but fear-smote
With none to chase him in his chariot whirl’d.

Was shown beside upon the solid floor
How dear Alcmaeon forc’d his mother rate
That ornament in evil hour receiv’d:
How in the temple on Sennacherib fell
His sons, and how a corpse they left him there.
Was shown the scath and cruel mangling made
By Tomyris on Cyrus, when she cried:

“Blood thou didst thirst for, take thy fill of blood!”
Was shown how routed in the battle fled
Th’ Assyrians, Holofernes slain, and e’en
The relics of the carnage. Troy I mark’d
In ashes and in caverns. Oh! how fall’n,
How abject, Ilion, was thy semblance there!

What master of the pencil or the style
Had trac’d the shades and lines, that might have made
The subtlest workman wonder? Dead the dead,
The living seem’d alive; with clearer view
His eye beheld not who beheld the truth,
Than mine what I did tread on, while I went
Low bending. Now swell out; and with stiff necks
Pass on, ye sons of Eve! veil not your looks,
Lest they descry the evil of your path!

I noted not (so busied was my thought)
How much we now had circled of the mount,
And of his course yet more the sun had spent,
When he, who with still wakeful caution went,
Admonish’d: “Raise thou up thy head: for know
Time is not now for slow suspense. Behold
That way an angel hasting towards us! Lo
Where duly the sixth handmaid doth return
From service on the day. Wear thou in look
And gesture seemly grace of reverent awe,
That gladly he may forward us aloft.
Consider that this day ne’er dawns again.”

Time’s loss he had so often warn’d me ‘gainst,
I could not miss the scope at which he aim’d.

The goodly shape approach’d us, snowy white
In vesture, and with visage casting streams
Of tremulous lustre like the matin star.
His arms he open’d, then his wings; and spake:
“Onward: the steps, behold! are near; and now
Th’ ascent is without difficulty gain’d.”

A scanty few are they, who when they hear
Such tidings, hasten. O ye race of men
Though born to soar, why suffer ye a wind
So slight to baffle ye? He led us on
Where the rock parted; here against my front
Did beat his wings, then promis'd I should fare
In safety on my way. As to ascend
That steep, upon whose brow the chapel stands
(O'er Rubaconte, looking lordly down
On the well-guided city,) up the right
Th' impetuous rise is broken by the steps
Carv'd in that old and simple age, when still
The registry and label rested safe;
Thus is th' acclivity reliev'd, which here
Precipitous from the other circuit falls:
But on each hand the tall cliff presses close.

As ent'ring there we turn'd, voices, in strain
Ineffable, sang: "Blessed are the poor
In spirit." Ah how far unlike to these
The straits of hell; here songs to usher us,
There shrieks of woe! We climb the holy stairs:
And lighter to myself by far I seem'd
Than on the plain before, whence thus I spake:
"Say, master, of what heavy thing have I
Been lighten'd, that scarce aught the sense of toil
Affects me journeying?" He in few replied:
"When sin's broad characters, that yet remain
Upon thy temples, though well nigh effac'd,
Shall be, as one is, all clean razed out,
Then shall thy feet by heartiness of will
Be so o'ercome, they not alone shall feel
No sense of labour, but delight much more
Shall wait them urg'd along their upward way."

Then like to one, upon whose head is plac'd
Somewhat he deems not of but from the becks
Of others as they pass him by; his hand
Lends therefore help to' assure him, searches, finds,
And well performs such office as the eye

And well performs such office as the eye
Wants power to execute: so stretching forth
The fingers of my right hand, did I find
Six only of the letters, which his sword
Who bare the keys had trac’d upon my brow.
The leader, as he mark’d mine action, smil’d.

CANTO XIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

We reach'd the summit of the scale, and stood
Upon the second buttress of that mount
Which healeth him who climbs. A cornice there,
Like to the former, girdles round the hill;
Save that its arch with sweep less ample bends.

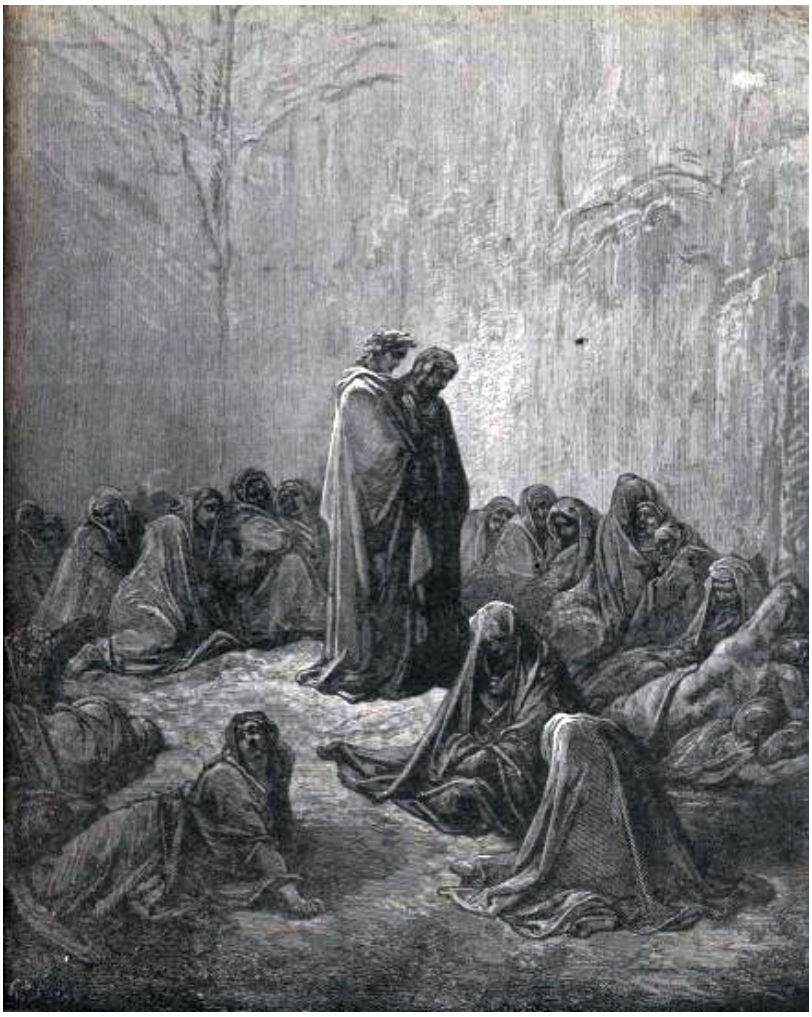
Shadow nor image there is seen; all smooth
The rampart and the path, reflecting nought
But the rock's sullen hue. "If here we wait
For some to question," said the bard, "I fear
Our choice may haply meet too long delay."

Then fixedly upon the sun his eyes
He fastn'd, made his right the central point
From whence to move, and turn'd the left aside.
"O pleasant light, my confidence and hope,
Conduct us thou," he cried, "on this new way,
Where now I venture, leading to the bourn
We seek. The universal world to thee
Owes warmth and lustre. If no other cause
Forbid, thy beams should ever be our guide."

Far, as is measur'd for a mile on earth,
In brief space had we journey'd; such prompt will
Impell'd; and towards us flying, now were heard
Spirits invisible, who courteously
Unto love's table bade the welcome guest.
The voice, that first? flew by, call'd forth aloud,
"They have no wine;" so on behind us past,
Those sounds reiterating, nor yet lost
In the faint distance, when another came
Crying, "I am Orestes," and alike
Wing'd its fleet way. "Oh father!" I exclaim'd,
"What tongues are these?" and as I question'd, lo!
A third exclaiming, "Love ye those have wrong'd you."

“This circuit,” said my teacher, “knots the scourge
For envy, and the cords are therefore drawn
By charity’s correcting hand. The curb
Is of a harsher sound, as thou shalt hear
(If I deem rightly), ere thou reach the pass,
Where pardon sets them free. But fix thine eyes
Intently through the air, and thou shalt see
A multitude before thee seated, each
Along the shelving grot.” Then more than erst
I op’d my eyes, before me view’d, and saw
Shadows with garments dark as was the rock;
And when we pass’d a little forth, I heard
A crying, “Blessed Mary! pray for us,
Michael and Peter! all ye saintly host!”

I do not think there walks on earth this day
Man so remorseless, that he hath not yearn’d
With pity at the sight that next I saw.
Mine eyes a load of sorrow teemed, when now
I stood so near them, that their semblances
Came clearly to my view. Of sackcloth vile
Their cov’ring seem’d; and on his shoulder one
Did stay another, leaning, and all lean’d
Against the cliff. E’en thus the blind and poor,
Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,
Stand, each his head upon his fellow’s sunk,



So most to stir compassion, not by sound
Of words alone, but that, which moves not less,
The sight of mis'ry. And as never beam
Of noonday visiteth the eyeless man,
E'en so was heav'n a niggard unto these
Of his fair light; for, through the orbs of all,
A thread of wire, impiercing, knits them up,
As for the taming of a haggard hawk.

It were a wrong, methought, to pass and look
On others, yet myself the while unseen.
To my sage counsel therefore did I turn.
He knew the meaning of the mute appeal,
Nor waited for my questioning, but said:
"Speak; and be brief, be subtle in thy words."

On that part of the cornice, whence no rim
Engarlands its steep fall, did Virgil come;
On the' other side me were the spirits, their cheeks
Bathing devout with penitential tears,
That through the dread impalement forc'd a way.

I turn'd me to them, and "O shades!" said I,

"Assur'd that to your eyes unveil'd shall shine
The lofty light, sole object of your wish,
So may heaven's grace clear whatsoe'er of foam
Floats turbid on the conscience, that thenceforth
The stream of mind roll limpid from its source,
As ye declare (for so shall ye impart
A boon I dearly prize) if any soul
Of Latium dwell among ye; and perchance
That soul may profit, if I learn so much."

"My brother, we are each one citizens
Of one true city. Any thou wouldst say,
Who lived a stranger in Italia's land."

So heard I answering, as appeal'd, a voice
That onward came some space from whence I stood.

A spirit I noted, in whose look was mark'd
Expectance. Ask ye how? The chin was rais'd
As in one reft of sight. "Spirit," said I,
"Who for thy rise are tutoring (if thou be
That which didst answer to me,) or by place
Or name, disclose thyself, that I may know thee."

"I was," it answer'd, "of Sienna: here
I cleanse away with these the evil life,
Soliciting with tears that He, who is,
Vouchsafe him to us. Though Sapia nam'd
In sapience I excell'd not, gladder far
Of others' hurt, than of the good befell me.
That thou mayst own I now deceive thee not,

Hear, if my folly were not as I speak it.
When now my years slop'd waning down the arch,
It so bechanc'd, my fellow citizens
Near Colle met their enemies in the field,
And I pray'd God to grant what He had will'd.
There were they vanquish'd, and betook themselves
Unto the bitter passages of flight.
I mark'd the hunt, and waxing out of bounds
In gladness, lifted up my shameless brow,
And like the merlin cheated by a gleam,
Cried, "It is over. Heav'n! I fear thee not."
Upon my verge of life I wish'd for peace
With God; nor repentance had supplied
What I did lack of duty, were it not
The hermit Piero, touch'd with charity,
In his devout orisons thought on me.
"But who art thou that question'st of our state,
Who go'st to my belief, with lids unclos'd,
And breathest in thy talk?"— "Mine eyes," said I,
"May yet be here ta'en from me; but not long;
For they have not offended grievously
With envious glances. But the woe beneath
Urges my soul with more exceeding dread.
That nether load already weighs me down."

She thus: "Who then amongst us here aloft
Hath brought thee, if thou weenest to return?"

“He,” answer’d I, “who standeth mute beside me.
I live: of me ask therefore, chosen spirit,
If thou desire I yonder yet should move
For thee my mortal feet.”— “Oh!” she replied,
“This is so strange a thing, it is great sign
That God doth love thee. Therefore with thy prayer
Sometime assist me: and by that I crave,
Which most thou covetest, that if thy feet
E’er tread on Tuscan soil, thou save my fame
Amongst my kindred. Them shalt thou behold
With that vain multitude, who set their hope
On Telamone’s haven, there to fail
Confounded, more shall when the fancied stream
They sought of Dian call’d: but they who lead
Their navies, more than ruin’d hopes shall mourn.”

CANTO XIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"Say who is he around our mountain winds,
Or ever death has prun'd his wing for flight,
That opes his eyes and covers them at will?"

"I know not who he is, but know thus much
He comes not singly. Do thou ask of him,
For thou art nearer to him, and take heed
Accost him gently, so that he may speak."

Thus on the right two Spirits bending each
Toward the other, talk'd of me, then both
Addressing me, their faces backward lean'd,
And thus the one began: "O soul, who yet
Pent in the body, tendest towards the sky!
For charity, we pray thee' comfort us,
Recounting whence thou com'st, and who thou art:
For thou dost make us at the favour shown thee
Marvel, as at a thing that ne'er hath been."

"There stretches through the midst of Tuscany,"
I straight began: "a brooklet, whose well-head
Springs up in Falterona, with his race
Not satisfied, when he some hundred miles
Hath measur'd. From his banks bring, I this frame.
To tell you who I am were words misspent:
For yet my name scarce sounds on rumour's lip."

"If well I do incorp'rate with my thought
The meaning of thy speech," said he, who first
Addrest me, "thou dost speak of Arno's wave."

To whom the other: "Why hath he conceal'd
The title of that river, as a man
Doth of some horrible thing?" The spirit, who
Thereof was question'd, did acquit him thus:

“I know not: but ’tis fitting well the name
Should perish of that vale; for from the source
Where teems so plenteously the Alpine steep
Maim’d of Pelorus, (that doth scarcely pass
Beyond that limit,) even to the point
Whereunto ocean is restor’d, what heaven
Drains from th’ exhaustless store for all earth’s streams,
Throughout the space is virtue worried down,
As ‘twere a snake, by all, for mortal foe,
Or through disastrous influence on the place,
Or else distortion of misguided wills,
That custom goads to evil: whence in those,
The dwellers in that miserable vale,
Nature is so transform’d, it seems as they
Had shar’d of Circe’s feeding. ’Midst brute swine,
Worthier of acorns than of other food
Created for man’s use, he shapeth first
His obscure way; then, sloping onward, finds
Curs, snarlers more in spite than power, from whom
He turns with scorn aside: still journeying down,
By how much more the curst and luckless foss
Swells out to largeness, e’en so much it finds
Dogs turning into wolves. Descending still
Through yet more hollow eddies, next he meets
A race of foxes, so replete with craft,
They do not fear that skill can master it.
Nor will I cease because my words are heard
By other ears than thine. It shall be well
For this man, if he keep in memory
What from no erring Spirit I reveal.
Lo! I behold thy grandson, that becomes
A hunter of those wolves, upon the shore
Of the fierce stream, and cows them all with dread:
Their flesh yet living sets he up to sale,
Then like an aged beast to slaughter dooms.
Many of life he reaves, himself of worth
And goodly estimation. Smear’d with gore
Mark how he issues from the rueful wood,

Leaving such havoc, that in thousand years
It spreads not to prime lustihood again."

As one, who tidings hears of woe to come,
Changes his looks perturb'd, from whate'er part
The peril grasp him, so beheld I change
That spirit, who had turn'd to listen, struck
With sadness, soon as he had caught the word.

His visage and the other's speech did raise
Desire in me to know the names of both,
whereof with meek entreaty I inquir'd.

The shade, who late addrest me, thus resum'd:
"Thy wish imports that I vouchsafe to do
For thy sake what thou wilt not do for mine.
But since God's will is that so largely shine
His grace in thee, I will be liberal too.
Guido of Duca know then that I am.
Envy so parch'd my blood, that had I seen
A fellow man made joyous, thou hadst mark'd
A livid paleness overspread my cheek.
Such harvest reap I of the seed I sow'd.
O man, why place thy heart where there doth need
Exclusion of participants in good?
This is Rinieri's spirit, this the boast
And honour of the house of Calboli,
Where of his worth no heritage remains.
Nor his the only blood, that hath been stript
('twixt Po, the mount, the Reno, and the shore,)
Of all that truth or fancy asks for bliss;
But in those limits such a growth has sprung
Of rank and venom'd roots, as long would mock
Slow culture's toil. Where is good Lizio? where
Manardi, Traversalo, and Carpigna?
O bastard slips of old Romagna's line!
When in Bologna the low artisan,
And in Faenza yon Bernardin sprouts,
A gentle cyon from ignoble stem.

Wonder not, Tuscan, if thou see me weep,
When I recall to mind those once lov'd names,
Guido of Prata, and of Azzo him
That dwelt with you; Tignoso and his troop,
With Traversaro's house and Anastagio's,
(Each race disherited) and beside these,
The ladies and the knights, the toils and ease,
That witch'd us into love and courtesy;
Where now such malice reigns in recreant hearts.
O Brettinoro! wherefore tarriest still,
Since forth of thee thy family hath gone,
And many, hating evil, join'd their steps?
Well doeth he, that bids his lineage cease,
Bagnacavallo; Castracaro ill,
And Conio worse, who care to propagate
A race of Counties from such blood as theirs.
Well shall ye also do, Pagani, then
When from amongst you tries your demon child.
Not so, howe'er, that henceforth there remain
True proof of what ye were. O Hugolin!
Thou sprung of Fantolini's line! thy name
Is safe, since none is look'd for after thee
To cloud its lustre, warping from thy stock.
But, Tuscan, go thy ways; for now I take
Far more delight in weeping than in words.
Such pity for your sakes hath wrung my heart."

We knew those gentle spirits at parting heard
Our steps. Their silence therefore of our way
Assur'd us. Soon as we had quitted them,
Advancing onward, lo! a voice that seem'd
Like vollied light'ning, when it rives the air,
Met us, and shouted, "Whosoever finds
Will slay me," then fled from us, as the bolt
Lanc'd sudden from a downward-rushing cloud.
When it had giv'n short truce unto our hearing,
Behold the other with a crash as loud
As the quick-following thunder: "Mark in me

Aglauros turn’d to rock.” I at the sound
Retreating drew more closely to my guide.

Now in mute stillness rested all the air:
And thus he spake: “There was the galling bit.
But your old enemy so baits his hook,
He drags you eager to him. Hence nor curb
Avails you, nor reclaiming call. Heav’n calls
And round about you wheeling courts your gaze
With everlasting beauties. Yet your eye
Turns with fond doting still upon the earth.
Therefore He smites you who discerneth all.”

CANTO XV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

As much as 'twixt the third hour's close and dawn,
Appeareth of heav'n's sphere, that ever whirls
As restless as an infant in his play,
So much appear'd remaining to the sun
Of his slope journey towards the western goal.

Evening was there, and here the noon of night;
and full upon our forehead smote the beams.
For round the mountain, circling, so our path
Had led us, that toward the sun-set now
Direct we journey'd: when I felt a weight
Of more exceeding splendour, than before,
Press on my front. The cause unknown, amaze
Possess'd me, and both hands against my brow
Lifting, I interpos'd them, as a screen,
That of its gorgeous superflux of light
Clipp'd the diminish'd orb. As when the ray,
Striking On water or the surface clear
Of mirror, leaps unto the opposite part,
Ascending at a glance, e'en as it fell,
(And so much differs from the stone, that falls)
Through equal space, as practice skill hath shown;
Thus with refracted light before me seemed
The ground there smitten; whence in sudden haste
My sight recoil'd. "What is this, sire belov'd!
'Gainst which I strive to shield the sight in vain?"
Cried I, "and which towards us moving seems?"

"Marvel not, if the family of heav'n,"
He answer'd, "yet with dazzling radiance dim
Thy sense it is a messenger who comes,
Inviting man's ascent. Such sights ere long,
Not grievous, shall impart to thee delight,
As thy perception is by nature wrought
Up to their pitch." The blessed angel, soon

As we had reach'd him, hail'd us with glad voice:
"Here enter on a ladder far less steep
Than ye have yet encounter'd." We forthwith
Ascending, heard behind us chanted sweet,
"Blessed the merciful," and "happy thou!
That conquer'st." Lonely each, my guide and I
Pursued our upward way; and as we went,
Some profit from his words I hop'd to win,
And thus of him inquiring, fram'd my speech:

"What meant Romagna's spirit, when he spake
Of bliss exclusive with no partner shar'd?"

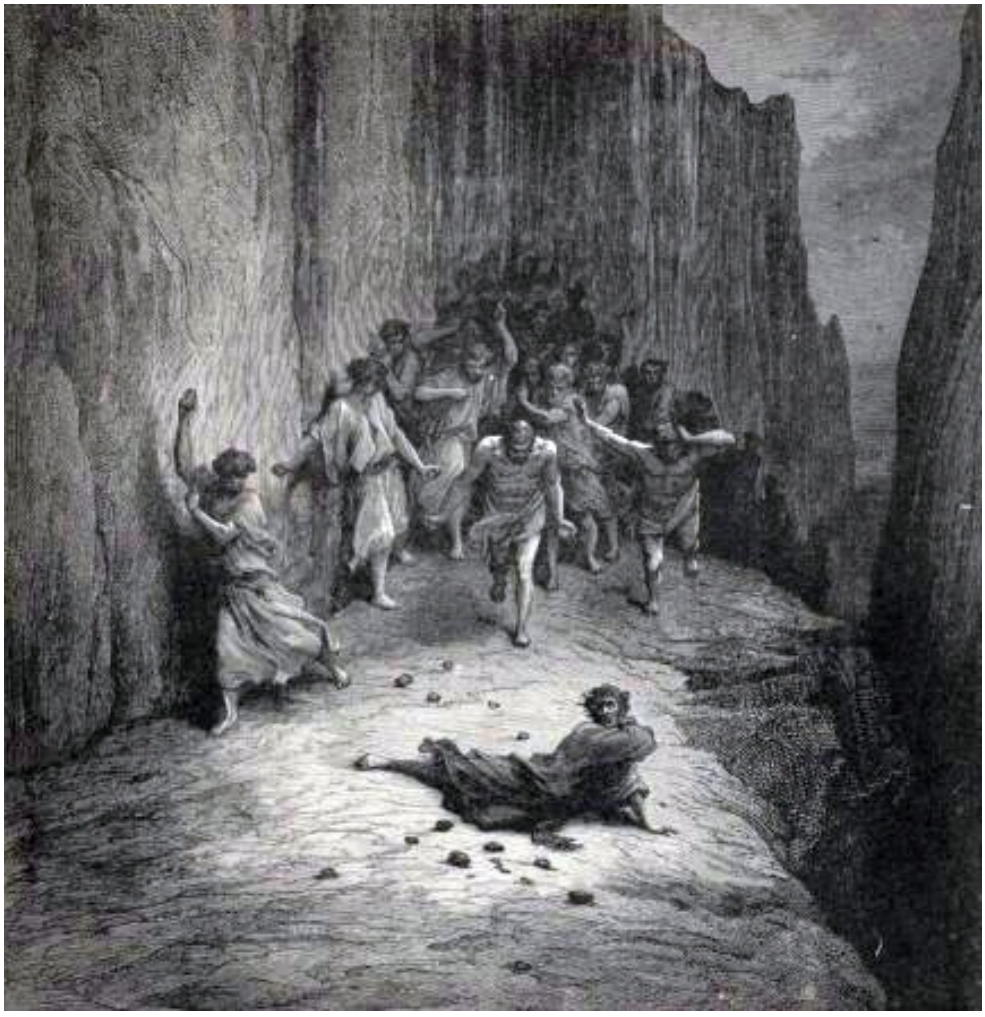
He straight replied: "No wonder, since he knows,
What sorrow waits on his own worst defect,
If he chide others, that they less may mourn.
Because ye point your wishes at a mark,
Where, by communion of possessors, part
Is lessen'd, envy bloweth up the sighs of men.
No fear of that might touch ye, if the love
Of higher sphere exalted your desire.
For there, by how much more they call it ours,
So much propriety of each in good
Increases more, and heighten'd charity
Wraps that fair cloister in a brighter flame."

"Now lack I satisfaction more," said I,
"Than if thou hadst been silent at the first,
And doubt more gathers on my lab'ring thought.
How can it chance, that good distributed,
The many, that possess it, makes more rich,
Than if 't were shar'd by few?" He answering thus:
"Thy mind, reverting still to things of earth,
Strikes darkness from true light. The highest good
Unlimited, ineffable, doth so speed
To love, as beam to lucid body darts,
Giving as much of ardour as it finds.
The sempiternal effluence streams abroad
Spreading, wherever charity extends.

So that the more aspirants to that bliss
Are multiplied, more good is there to love,
And more is lov'd; as mirrors, that reflect,
Each unto other, propagated light.
If these my words avail not to allay
Thy thirsting, Beatrice thou shalt see,
Who of this want, and of all else thou hast,
Shall rid thee to the full. Provide but thou
That from thy temples may be soon eras'd,
E'en as the two already, those five scars,
That when they pain thee worst, then kindliest heal,"

"Thou," I had said, "content'st me," when I saw
The other round was gain'd, and wond'ring eyes
Did keep me mute. There suddenly I seem'd
By an ecstatic vision wrapt away;
And in a temple saw, methought, a crowd
Of many persons; and at th' entrance stood
A dame, whose sweet demeanour did express
A mother's love, who said, "Child! why hast thou
Dealt with us thus? Behold thy sire and I
Sorrowing have sought thee;" and so held her peace,
And straight the vision fled. A female next
Appear'd before me, down whose visage cours'd
Those waters, that grief forces out from one
By deep resentment stung, who seem'd to say:
"If thou, Pisistratus, be lord indeed
Over this city, nam'd with such debate
Of adverse gods, and whence each science sparkles,
Avenge thee of those arms, whose bold embrace
Hath clasp'd our daughter; "and to fuel, meseem'd,
Benign and meek, with visage undisturb'd,
Her sovran spake: "How shall we those requite,
Who wish us evil, if we thus condemn
The man that loves us?" After that I saw
A multitude, in fury burning, slay
With stones a stripling youth, and shout amain
"Destroy, destroy!" and him I saw, who bow'd

Heavy with death unto the ground, yet made
His eyes, unfolded upward, gates to heav’n,



Praying forgiveness of th’ Almighty Sire,
Amidst that cruel conflict, on his foes,
With looks, that With compassion to their aim.

Soon as my spirit, from her airy flight
Returning, sought again the things, whose truth
Depends not on her shaping, I observ’d
How she had rov’d to no unreal scenes

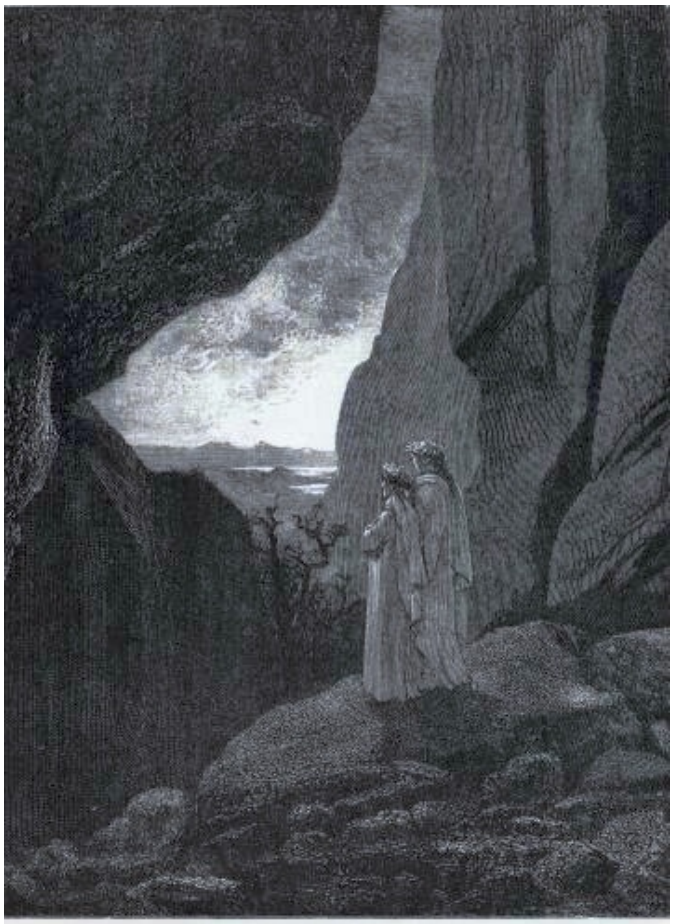
Meanwhile the leader, who might see I mov’d,
As one, who struggles to shake off his sleep,
Exclaim’d: “What ails thee, that thou canst not hold
Thy footing firm, but more than half a league

Hast travel'd with clos'd eyes and tott'ring gait,
Like to a man by wine or sleep o'ercharg'd?"

"Beloved father! so thou deign," said I,
"To listen, I will tell thee what appear'd
Before me, when so fail'd my sinking steps."

He thus: "Not if thy Countenance were mask'd
With hundred vizards, could a thought of thine
How small soe'er, elude me. What thou saw'st
Was shown, that freely thou mightst ope thy heart
To the waters of peace, that flow diffus'd
From their eternal fountain. I not ask'd,
What ails thee? for such cause as he doth, who
Looks only with that eye which sees no more,
When spiritless the body lies; but ask'd,
To give fresh vigour to thy foot. Such goads
The slow and loit'ring need; that they be found
Not wanting, when their hour of watch returns."

So on we journey'd through the evening sky
Gazing intent, far onward, as our eyes
With level view could stretch against the bright
Vespertine ray: and lo! by slow degrees
Gath'ring, a fog made tow'rds us, dark as night.
There was no room for 'scaping; and that mist
Bereft us, both of sight and the pure air.



By that hidden way
My guide and I did enter, to return
To the fair world.

Canto XXXIV., lines 127–129.

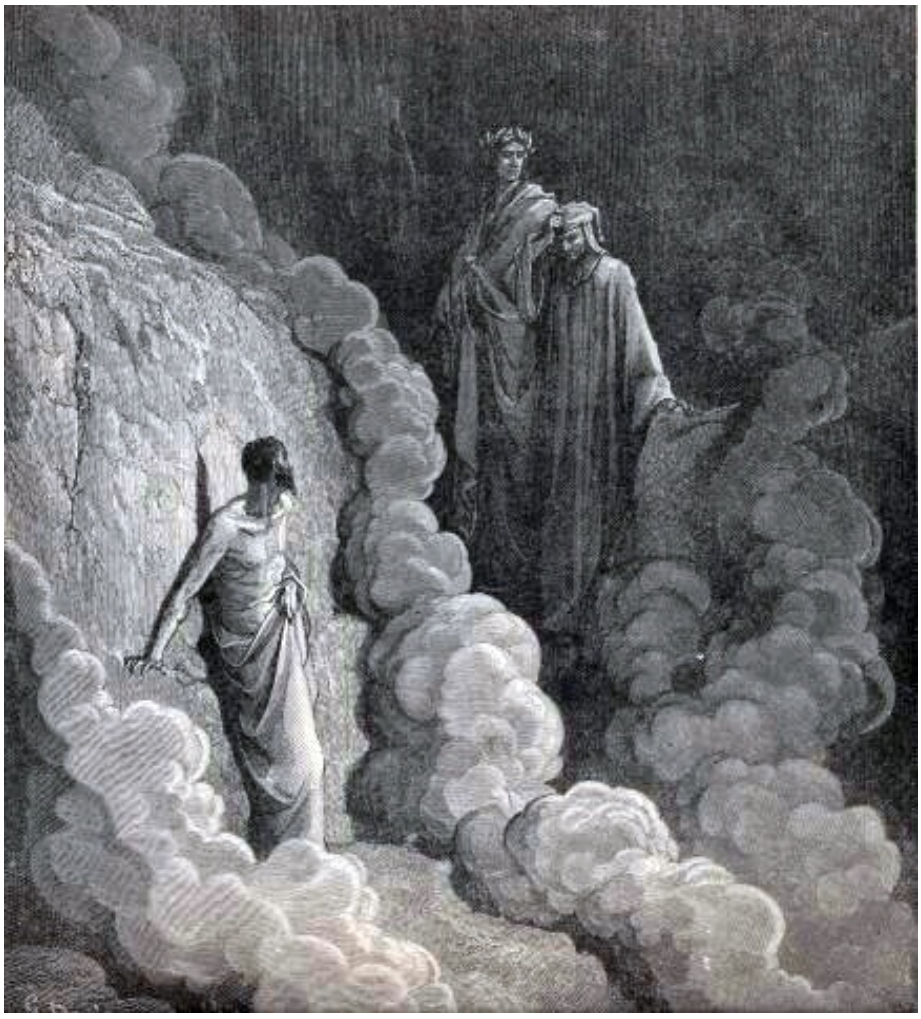
Thence issuing we again beheld the stars.
Canto XXXIV., line 133.

CANTO XVI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Hell's dunnest gloom, or night unlustrous, dark,
Of every planes 'reft, and pall'd in clouds,
Did never spread before the sight a veil
In thickness like that fog, nor to the sense
So palpable and gross. Ent'ring its shade,
Mine eye endured not with unclosed lids;
Which marking, near me drew the faithful guide,
Offering me his shoulder for a stay.

As the blind man behind his leader walks,
Lest he should err, or stumble unawares
On what might harm him, or perhaps destroy,
I journey'd through that bitter air and foul,
Still list'ning to my escort's warning voice,
"Look that from me thou part not." Straight I heard
Voices, and each one seem'd to pray for peace,
And for compassion, to the Lamb of God
That taketh sins away. Their prelude still
Was "Agnus Dei," and through all the choir,
One voice, one measure ran, that perfect seem'd
The concord of their song. "Are these I hear
Spirits, O master?" I exclaim'd; and he:
"Thou aim'st aright: these loose the bonds of wrath."



“Now who art thou, that through our smoke dost cleave?
And speak’st of us, as thou thyself e’en yet
Dividest time by calends?” So one voice
Bespake me; whence my master said: “Reply;
And ask, if upward hence the passage lead.”

“O being! who dost make thee pure, to stand
Beautiful once more in thy Maker’s sight!
Along with me: and thou shalt hear and wonder.”
Thus I, whereto the spirit answering spake:

“Long as ‘t is lawful for me, shall my steps
Follow on thine; and since the cloudy smoke
Forbids the seeing, hearing in its stead
Shall keep us join’d.” I then forthwith began
“Yet in my mortal swathing, I ascend
To higher regions, and am hither come
Through the fearful agony of hell.
And, if so largely God hath doled his grace,
That, clean beside all modern precedent,
He wills me to behold his kingly state,
From me conceal not who thou wast, ere death
Had loos’d thee; but instruct me: and instruct
If rightly to the pass I tend; thy words
The way directing as a safe escort.”

“I was of Lombardy, and Marco call’d:
Not inexperienc’d of the world, that worth
I still affected, from which all have turn’d
The nerveless bow aside. Thy course tends right
Unto the summit:” and, replying thus,
He added, “I beseech thee pray for me,
When thou shalt come aloft.” And I to him:
“Accept my faith for pledge I will perform
What thou requirest. Yet one doubt remains,
That wrings me sorely, if I solve it not,
Singly before it urg’d me, doubled now
By thine opinion, when I couple that
With one elsewhere declar’d, each strength’ning other.
The world indeed is even so forlorn
Of all good as thou speak’st it and so swarms
With every evil. Yet, beseech thee, point
The cause out to me, that myself may see,
And unto others show it: for in heaven
One places it, and one on earth below.”

Then heaving forth a deep and audible sigh,
“Brother!” he thus began, “the world is blind;
And thou in truth com’st from it. Ye, who live,
Do so each cause refer to heav’n above,
E’en as its motion of necessity
Drew with it all that moves. If this were so,
Free choice in you were none; nor justice would
There should be joy for virtue, woe for ill.
Your movements have their primal bent from heaven;
Not all; yet said I all; what then ensues?
Light have ye still to follow evil or good,
And of the will free power, which, if it stand
Firm and unwearied in Heav’n’s first assay,
Conquers at last, so it be cherish’d well,
Triumphant over all. To mightier force,
To better nature subject, ye abide
Free, not constrain’d by that, which forms in you
The reasoning mind uninfluenc’d of the stars.
If then the present race of mankind err,

Seek in yourselves the cause, and find it there.
Herein thou shalt confess me no false spy.

“Forth from his plastic hand, who charm’d beholds
Her image ere she yet exist, the soul
Comes like a babe, that wantons sportively
Weeping and laughing in its wayward moods,
As artless and as ignorant of aught,
Save that her Maker being one who dwells
With gladness ever, willingly she turns
To whate’er yields her joy. Of some slight good
The flavour soon she tastes; and, snar’d by that,
With fondness she pursues it, if no guide
Recall, no rein direct her wand’ring course.
Hence it behov’d, the law should be a curb;
A sovereign hence behov’d, whose piercing view
Might mark at least the fortress and main tower
Of the true city. Laws indeed there are:
But who is he observes them? None; not he,
Who goes before, the shepherd of the flock,
Who chews the cud but doth not cleave the hoof.
Therefore the multitude, who see their guide
Strike at the very good they covet most,
Feed there and look no further. Thus the cause
Is not corrupted nature in yourselves,
But ill-conducting, that hath turn’d the world
To evil. Rome, that turn’d it unto good,
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams
Cast light on either way, the world’s and God’s.
One since hath quench’d the other; and the sword
Is grafted on the crook; and so conjoin’d
Each must perforce decline to worse, unaw’d
By fear of other. If thou doubt me, mark
The blade: each herb is judg’d of by its seed.
That land, through which Adice and the Po
Their waters roll, was once the residence
Of courtesy and velour, ere the day,
That frown’d on Frederick; now secure may pass
Those limits, whosoe’er hath left, for shame,

To talk with good men, or come near their haunts.
Three aged ones are still found there, in whom
The old time chides the new: these deem it long
Ere God restore them to a better world:
The good Gherardo, of Palazzo he
Conrad, and Guido of Castello, nam'd
In Gallic phrase more fitly the plain Lombard.
On this at last conclude. The church of Rome,
Mixing two governments that ill assort,
Hath miss'd her footing, fall'n into the mire,
And there herself and burden much defil'd."

"O Marco!" I replied, shine arguments
Convince me: and the cause I now discern
Why of the heritage no portion came
To Levi's offspring. But resolve me this
Who that Gherardo is, that as thou sayst
Is left a sample of the perish'd race,
And for rebuke to this untoward age?"

"Either thy words," said he, "deceive; or else
Are meant to try me; that thou, speaking Tuscan,
Appear'st not to have heard of good Gherado;
The sole addition that, by which I know him;
Unless I borrow'd from his daughter Gaia
Another name to grace him. God be with you.
I bear you company no more. Behold
The dawn with white ray glimm'ring through the mist.
I must away — the angel comes — ere he
Appear." He said, and would not hear me more.

CANTO XVII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Call to remembrance, reader, if thou e'er
Hast, on a mountain top, been ta'en by cloud,
Through which thou saw'st no better, than the mole
Doth through opacous membrane; then, whene'er
The wat'ry vapours dense began to melt
Into thin air, how faintly the sun's sphere
Seem'd wading through them; so thy nimble thought
May image, how at first I re-beheld
The sun, that bedward now his couch o'erhung.

Thus with my leader's feet still equaling pace
From forth that cloud I came, when now expir'd
The parting beams from off the nether shores.

O quick and forgetive power! that sometimes dost
So rob us of ourselves, we take no mark
Though round about us thousand trumpets clang!
What moves thee, if the senses stir not? Light
Kindled in heav'n, spontaneous, self-inform'd,
Or likelier gliding down with swift illapse
By will divine. Portray'd before me came
The traces of her dire impiety,
Whose form was chang'd into the bird, that most
Delights itself in song: and here my mind
Was inwardly so wrapt, it gave no place
To aught that ask'd admittance from without.

Next shower'd into my fantasy a shape
As of one crucified, whose visage spake
Fell rancour, malice deep, wherein he died;
And round him Ahasuerus the great king,
Esther his bride, and Mordecai the just,
Blameless in word and deed. As of itself
That unsubstantial coinage of the brain
Burst, like a bubble, Which the water fails

That fed it; in my vision straight uprose
A damsel weeping loud, and cried, “O queen!
O mother! wherefore has intemperate ire
Driv’n thee to loath thy being? Not to lose
Lavinia, desp’rate thou hast slain thyself.
Now hast thou lost me. I am she, whose tears
Mourn, ere I fall, a mother’s timeless end.”

E’en as a sleep breaks off, if suddenly
New radiance strike upon the closed lids,
The broken slumber quivering ere it dies;
Thus from before me sunk that imagery
Vanishing, soon as on my face there struck
The light, outshining far our earthly beam.
As round I turn’d me to survey what place
I had arriv’d at, “Here ye mount,” exclaim’d
A voice, that other purpose left me none,
Save will so eager to behold who spake,
I could not choose but gaze. As ‘fore the sun,
That weighs our vision down, and veils his form
In light transcendent, thus my virtue fail’d
Unequal. ”This is Spirit from above,
Who marshals us our upward way, unsought;
And in his own light shrouds him. As a man
Doth for himself, so now is done for us.
For whoso waits imploring, yet sees need
Of his prompt aidance, sets himself prepar’d
For blunt denial, ere the suit be made.
Refuse we not to lend a ready foot
At such inviting: haste we to ascend,
Before it darken: for we may not then,
Till morn again return.” So spake my guide;
And to one ladder both address’d our steps;
And the first stair approaching, I perceiv’d
Near me as ‘twere the waving of a wing,
That fann’d my face and whisper’d: “Blessed they
The peacemakers: they know not evil wrath.”

Now to such height above our heads were rais'd
The last beams, follow'd close by hooded night,
That many a star on all sides through the gloom
Shone out. "Why partest from me, O my strength?"
So with myself I commun'd; for I felt
My o'ertoil'd sinews slacken. We had reach'd
The summit, and were fix'd like to a bark
Arriv'd at land. And waiting a short space,
If aught should meet mine ear in that new round,
Then to my guide I turn'd, and said: "Lov'd sire!
Declare what guilt is on this circle purg'd.
If our feet rest, no need thy speech should pause."

He thus to me: "The love of good, whate'er
Wanted of just proportion, here fulfils.
Here plies afresh the oar, that loiter'd ill.
But that thou mayst yet clearlier understand,
Give ear unto my words, and thou shalt cull
Some fruit may please thee well, from this delay.

"Creator, nor created being, ne'er,
My son," he thus began, "was without love,
Or natural, or the free spirit's growth.
Thou hast not that to learn. The natural still
Is without error; but the other swerves,
If on ill object bent, or through excess
Of vigour, or defect. While e'er it seeks
The primal blessings, or with measure due
Th' inferior, no delight, that flows from it,
Partakes of ill. But let it warp to evil,
Or with more ardour than behooves, or less.
Pursue the good, the thing created then
Works 'gainst its Maker. Hence thou must infer
That love is germin of each virtue in ye,
And of each act no less, that merits pain.
Now since it may not be, but love intend
The welfare mainly of the thing it loves,
All from self-hatred are secure; and since
No being can be thought t' exist apart

And independent of the first, a bar
Of equal force restrains from hating that.

“Grant the distinction just; and it remains
The’ evil must be another’s, which is lov’d.
Three ways such love is gender’d in your clay.
There is who hopes (his neighbour’s worth deprest,)
Preeminence himself, and coverts hence
For his own greatness that another fall.
There is who so much fears the loss of power,
Fame, favour, glory (should his fellow mount
Above him), and so sickens at the thought,
He loves their opposite: and there is he,
Whom wrong or insult seems to gall and shame
That he doth thirst for vengeance, and such needs
Must doat on other’s evil. Here beneath
This threefold love is mourn’d. Of th’ other sort
Be now instructed, that which follows good
But with disorder’d and irregular course.

“All indistinctly apprehend a bliss
On which the soul may rest, the hearts of all
Yearn after it, and to that wished bourn
All therefore strive to tend. If ye behold
Or seek it with a love remiss and lax,
This cornice after just repenting lays
Its penal torment on ye. Other good
There is, where man finds not his happiness:
It is not true fruition, not that blest
Essence, of every good the branch and root.
The love too lavishly bestow’d on this,
Along three circles over us, is mourn’d.
Account of that division tripartite
Expect not, fitter for thine own research.”

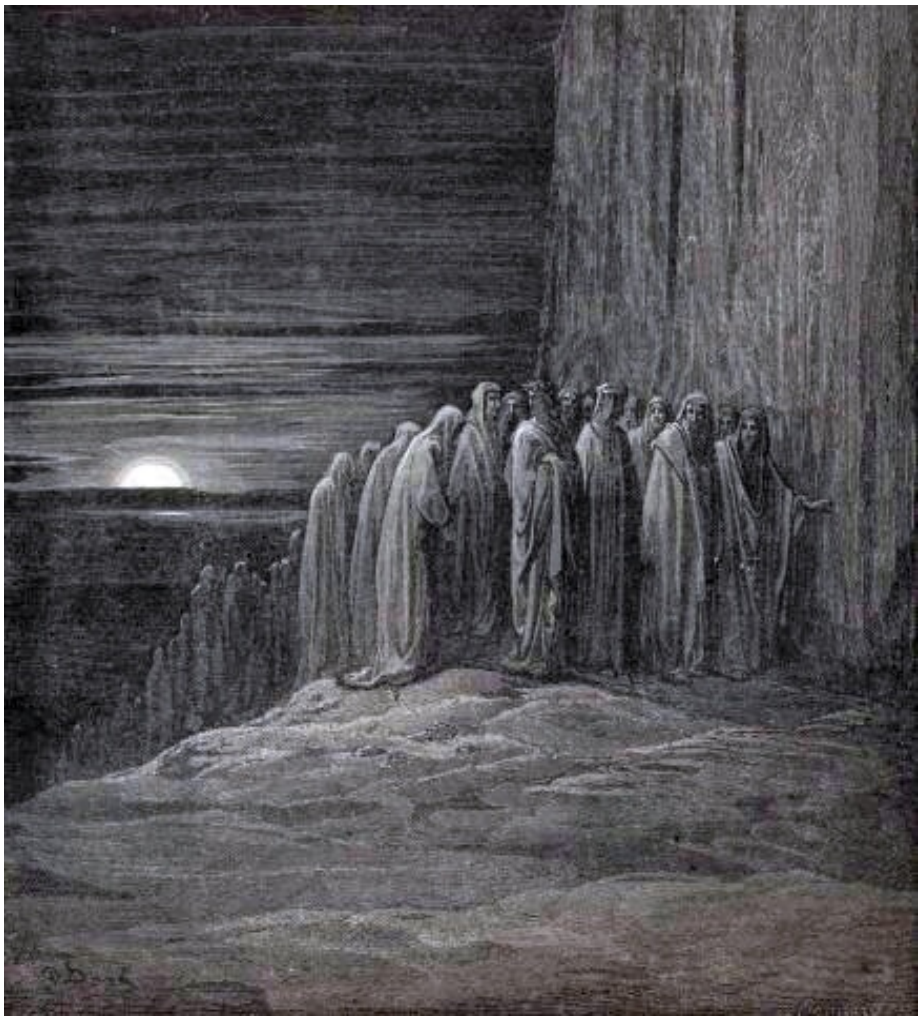
CANTO XVIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

The teacher ended, and his high discourse
Concluding, earnest in my looks inquir'd
If I appear'd content; and I, whom still
Unsated thirst to hear him urg'd, was mute,
Mute outwardly, yet inwardly I said:
"Perchance my too much questioning offends."
But he, true father, mark'd the secret wish
By diffidence restrain'd, and speaking, gave
Me boldness thus to speak: "Master, my Sight
Gathers so lively virtue from thy beams,
That all, thy words convey, distinct is seen.
Wherefore I pray thee, father, whom this heart
Holds dearest! thou wouldst deign by proof t' unfold
That love, from which as from their source thou bring'st
All good deeds and their opposite." He then:
"To what I now disclose be thy clear ken
Directed, and thou plainly shalt behold
How much those blind have err'd, who make themselves
The guides of men. The soul, created apt
To love, moves versatile which way soe'er
Aught pleasing prompts her, soon as she is wak'd
By pleasure into act. Of substance true
Your apprehension forms its counterfeit,
And in you the ideal shape presenting
Attracts the soul's regard. If she, thus drawn,
incline toward it, love is that inclining,
And a new nature knit by pleasure in ye.
Then as the fire points up, and mounting seeks
His birth-place and his lasting seat, e'en thus
Enters the captive soul into desire,
Which is a spiritual motion, that ne'er rests
Before enjoyment of the thing it loves.
Enough to show thee, how the truth from those
Is hidden, who aver all love a thing

Praise-worthy in itself: although perhaps
Its substance seem still good. Yet if the wax
Be good, it follows not th' impression must."
"What love is," I return'd, "thy words, O guide!
And my own docile mind, reveal. Yet thence
New doubts have sprung. For from without if love
Be offer'd to us, and the spirit knows
No other footing, tend she right or wrong,
Is no desert of hers." He answering thus:
"What reason here discovers I have power
To show thee: that which lies beyond, expect
From Beatrice, faith not reason's task.
Spirit, substantial form, with matter join'd
Not in confusion mix'd, hath in itself
Specific virtue of that union born,
Which is not felt except it work, nor prov'd
But through effect, as vegetable life
By the green leaf. From whence his intellect
Deduced its primal notices of things,
Man therefore knows not, or his appetites
Their first affections; such in you, as zeal
In bees to gather honey; at the first,
Volition, meriting nor blame nor praise.
But o'er each lower faculty supreme,
That as she list are summon'd to her bar,
Ye have that virtue in you, whose just voice
Uttereth counsel, and whose word should keep
The threshold of assent. Here is the source,
Whence cause of merit in you is deriv'd,
E'en as the affections good or ill she takes,
Or severs, winnow'd as the chaff. Those men
Who reas'ning went to depth profoundest, mark'd
That innate freedom, and were thence induc'd
To leave their moral teaching to the world.
Grant then, that from necessity arise
All love that glows within you; to dismiss
Or harbour it, the pow'r is in yourselves.
Remember, Beatrice, in her style,
Denominates free choice by eminence

The noble virtue, if in talk with thee
She touch upon that theme." The moon, well nigh
To midnight hour belated, made the stars
Appear to wink and fade; and her broad disk
Seem'd like a crag on fire, as up the vault
That course she journey'd, which the sun then warms,
When they of Rome behold him at his set.
Betwixt Sardinia and the Corsic isle.
And now the weight, that hung upon my thought,
Was lighten'd by the aid of that clear spirit,
Who raiseth Andes above Mantua's name.
I therefore, when my questions had obtain'd
Solution plain and ample, stood as one
Musing in dreary slumber; but not long
Slumber'd; for suddenly a multitude,



The steep already turning, from behind,
Rush'd on. With fury and like random rout,
As echoing on their shores at midnight heard
Ismenus and Asopus, for his Thebes
If Bacchus' help were needed; so came these
Tumultuous, curving each his rapid step,
By eagerness impell'd of holy love.

Soon they o'ertook us; with such swiftness mov'd
The mighty crowd. Two spirits at their head
Cried weeping; "Blessed Mary sought with haste
The hilly region. Caesar to subdue
Ilerda, darted in Marseilles his sting,
And flew to Spain."— "Oh tarry not: away;"
The others shouted; "let not time be lost
Through slackness of affection. Hearty zeal
To serve reanimates celestial grace."

"O ye, in whom intenser fervency
Haply supplies, where lukewarm erst ye fail'd,
Slow or neglectful, to absolve your part
Of good and virtuous, this man, who yet lives,
(Credit my tale, though strange) desires t' ascend,
So morning rise to light us. Therefore say
Which hand leads nearest to the rifted rock?"

So spake my guide, to whom a shade return'd:
"Come after us, and thou shalt find the cleft.
We may not linger: such resistless will
Speeds our unwearied course. Vouchsafe us then
Thy pardon, if our duty seem to thee
Discourteous rudeness. In Verona I
Was abbot of San Zeno, when the hand
Of Barbarossa grasp'd Imperial sway,
That name, ne'er utter'd without tears in Milan.
And there is he, hath one foot in his grave,
Who for that monastery ere long shall weep,
Ruing his power misus'd: for that his son,
Of body ill compact, and worse in mind,

And born in evil, he hath set in place
Of its true pastor." Whether more he spake,
Or here was mute, I know not: he had sped
E'en now so far beyond us. Yet thus much
I heard, and in rememb'rance treasur'd it.

He then, who never fail'd me at my need,
Cried, "Hither turn. Lo! two with sharp remorse
Chiding their sin!" In rear of all the troop
These shouted: "First they died, to whom the sea
Open'd, or ever Jordan saw his heirs:
And they, who with Aeneas to the end
Endur'd not suffering, for their portion chose
Life without glory." Soon as they had fled
Past reach of sight, new thought within me rose
By others follow'd fast, and each unlike
Its fellow: till led on from thought to thought,
And pleasur'd with the fleeting train, mine eye
Was clos'd, and meditation chang'd to dream.

CANTO XIX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

It was the hour, when of diurnal heat
No reliques chafe the cold beams of the moon,
O'erpower'd by earth, or planetary sway
Of Saturn; and the geomancer sees
His Greater Fortune up the east ascend,
Where gray dawn checkers first the shadowy cone;
When 'fore me in my dream a woman's shape
There came, with lips that stammer'd, eyes aslant,
Distorted feet, hands maim'd, and colour pale.

I look'd upon her; and as sunshine cheers
Limbs numb'd by nightly cold, e'en thus my look
Unloos'd her tongue, next in brief space her form
Decrepit rais'd erect, and faded face
With love's own hue illum'd. Recov'ring speech
She forthwith warbling such a strain began,
That I, how loth soe'er, could scarce have held
Attention from the song. "I," thus she sang,
"I am the Siren, she, whom mariners
On the wide sea are wilder'd when they hear:
Such fulness of delight the list'ner feels.
I from his course Ulysses by my lay
Enchanted drew. Whoe'er frequents me once
Parts seldom; so I charm him, and his heart
Contented knows no void." Or ere her mouth
Was clos'd, to shame her at her side appear'd
A dame of semblance holy. With stern voice
She utter'd; "Say, O Virgil, who is this?"
Which hearing, he approach'd, with eyes still bent
Toward that goodly presence: th' other seiz'd her,
And, her robes tearing, open'd her before,
And show'd the belly to me, whence a smell,
Exhaling loathsome, wak'd me. Round I turn'd
Mine eyes, and thus the teacher: "At the least

Three times my voice hath call'd thee. Rise, begone.
Let us the opening find where thou mayst pass."

I straightway rose. Now day, pour'd down from high,
Fill'd all the circuits of the sacred mount;
And, as we journey'd, on our shoulder smote
The early ray. I follow'd, stooping low
My forehead, as a man, o'ercharg'd with thought,
Who bends him to the likeness of an arch,
That midway spans the flood; when thus I heard,
"Come, enter here," in tone so soft and mild,
As never met the ear on mortal strand.

With swan-like wings dispread and pointing up,
Who thus had spoken marshal'd us along,
Where each side of the solid masonry
The sloping, walls retir'd; then mov'd his plumes,
And fanning us, affirm'd that those, who mourn,
Are blessed, for that comfort shall be theirs.

"What aileth thee, that still thou look'st to earth?"
Began my leader; while th' angelic shape
A little over us his station took.

“New vision,” I replied, “hath rais’d in me
Surmizings strange and anxious doubts, whereon
My soul intent allows no other thought
Or room or entrance.”— “Hast thou seen,” said he,
“That old enchantress, her, whose wiles alone
The spirits o’er us weep for? Hast thou seen
How man may free him of her bonds? Enough.
Let thy heels spurn the earth, and thy rais’d ken
Fix on the lure, which heav’n’s eternal King
Whirls in the rolling spheres.” As on his feet
The falcon first looks down, then to the sky
Turns, and forth stretches eager for the food,
That woos him thither; so the call I heard,
So onward, far as the dividing rock
Gave way, I journey’d, till the plain was reach’d.

On the fifth circle when I stood at large,
A race appear'd before me, on the ground
All downward lying prone and weeping sore.
"My soul hath cleaved to the dust," I heard
With sighs so deep, they well nigh choak'd the words.
"O ye elect of God, whose penal woes
Both hope and justice mitigate, direct
Tow'rds the steep rising our uncertain way."

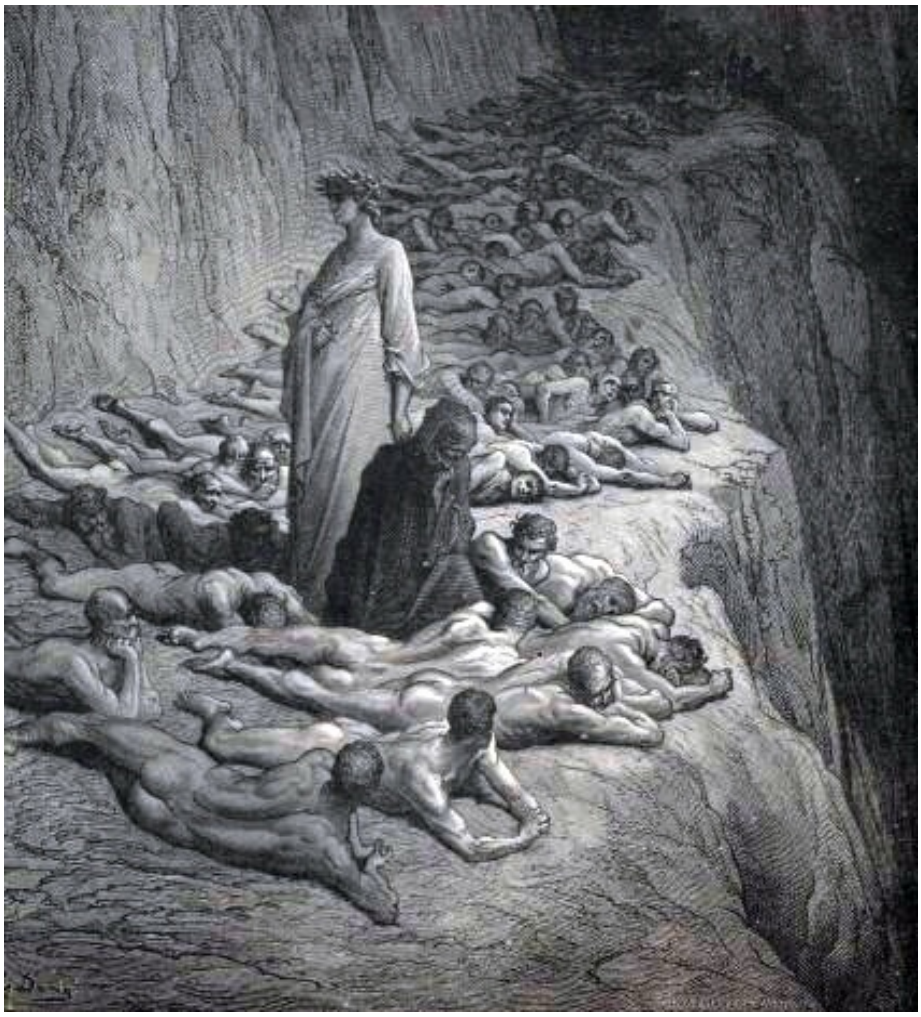
"If ye approach secure from this our doom,
Prostration — and would urge your course with speed,
See that ye still to rightward keep the brink."

So them the bard besought; and such the words,
Beyond us some short space, in answer came.

I noted what remain'd yet hidden from them:
Thence to my liege's eyes mine eyes I bent,
And he, forthwith interpreting their suit,
Beckon'd his glad assent. Free then to act,
As pleas'd me, I drew near, and took my stand
O`er that shade, whose words I late had mark'd.
And, "Spirit!" I said, "in whom repentant tears
Mature that blessed hour, when thou with God
Shalt find acceptance, for a while suspend
For me that mightier care. Say who thou wast,
Why thus ye grovel on your bellies prone,
And if in aught ye wish my service there,
Whence living I am come." He answering spake
"The cause why Heav'n our back toward his cope
Reverses, shalt thou know: but me know first
The successor of Peter, and the name
And title of my lineage from that stream,
That' twixt Chiaveri and Siestri draws
His limpid waters through the lowly glen.
A month and little more by proof I learnt,
With what a weight that robe of sov'reignty
Upon his shoulder rests, who from the mire
Would guard it: that each other fardel seems

But feathers in the balance. Late, alas!
Was my conversion: but when I became
Rome's pastor, I discern'd at once the dream
And cozenage of life, saw that the heart
Rested not there, and yet no prouder height
Lur'd on the climber: wherefore, of that life
No more enamour'd, in my bosom love
Of purer being kindled. For till then
I was a soul in misery, alienate
From God, and covetous of all earthly things;
Now, as thou seest, here punish'd for my doting.
Such cleansing from the taint of avarice
Do spirits converted need. This mount inflicts
No direr penalty. E'en as our eyes
Fasten'd below, nor e'er to loftier clime
Were lifted, thus hath justice level'd us
Here on the earth. As avarice quench'd our love
Of good, without which is no working, thus
Here justice holds us prison'd, hand and foot
Chain'd down and bound, while heaven's just Lord shall please.
So long to tarry motionless outstretch'd."

My knees I stoop'd, and would have spoke; but he,
Ere my beginning, by his ear perceiv'd
I did him reverence; and "What cause," said he,
"Hath bow'd thee thus!"— "Compunction," I rejoin'd.
"And inward awe of your high dignity."



“Up,” he exclaim’d, “brother! upon thy feet
Arise: err not: thy fellow servant I,
(Thine and all others’) of one Sovran Power.
If thou hast ever mark’d those holy sounds
Of gospel truth, ‘nor shall be given ill marriage,’
Thou mayst discern the reasons of my speech.
Go thy ways now; and linger here no more.
Thy tarrying is a let unto the tears,
With which I hasten that whereof thou spak’st.
I have on earth a kinswoman; her name
Alagia, worthy in herself, so ill
Example of our house corrupt her not:
And she is all remaineth of me there.”

CANTO XX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Ill strives the will, 'gainst will more wise that strives
His pleasure therefore to mine own preferr'd,
I drew the sponge yet thirsty from the wave.

Onward I mov'd: he also onward mov'd,
Who led me, coasting still, wherever place
Along the rock was vacant, as a man
Walks near the battlements on narrow wall.
For those on th' other part, who drop by drop
Wring out their all-infecting malady,
Too closely press the verge. Accurst be thou!
Inveterate wolf! whose gorge ingluts more prey,
Than every beast beside, yet is not fill'd!
So bottomless thy maw! — Ye spheres of heaven!
To whom there are, as seems, who attribute
All change in mortal state, when is the day
Of his appearing, for whom fate reserves
To chase her hence? — With wary steps and slow
We pass'd; and I attentive to the shades,
Whom piteously I heard lament and wail;

And, ‘midst the wailing, one before us heard
Cry out “O blessed Virgin!” as a dame
In the sharp pangs of childbed; and “How poor
Thou wast,” it added, “witness that low roof
Where thou didst lay thy sacred burden down.
O good Fabricius! thou didst virtue choose
With poverty, before great wealth with vice.”

The words so pleas’d me, that desire to know
The spirit, from whose lip they seem’d to come,
Did draw me onward. Yet it spake the gift
Of Nicholas, which on the maidens he
Bounteous bestow’d, to save their youthful prime
Unblemish’d. ”Spirit! who dost speak of deeds
So worthy, tell me who thou was,” I said,

“And why thou dost with single voice renew
Memorial of such praise. That boon vouchsaf’d
Haply shall meet reward; if I return
To finish the Short pilgrimage of life,
Still speeding to its close on restless wing.”

“I,” answer’d he, “will tell thee, not for hell,
Which thence I look for; but that in thyself
Grace so exceeding shines, before thy time
Of mortal dissolution. I was root
Of that ill plant, whose shade such poison sheds
O’er all the Christian land, that seldom thence
Good fruit is gather’d. Vengeance soon should come,
Had Ghent and Douay, Lille and Bruges power;
And vengeance I of heav’n’s great Judge implore.
Hugh Capet was I high: from me descend
The Philips and the Louis, of whom France
Newly is govern’d; born of one, who ply’d
The slaughterer’s trade at Paris. When the race
Of ancient kings had vanish’d (all save one
Wrapt up in sable weeds) within my gripe
I found the reins of empire, and such powers
Of new acquirement, with full store of friends,
That soon the widow’d circlet of the crown
Was girt upon the temples of my son,
He, from whose bones th’ anointed race begins.
Till the great dower of Provence had remov’d
The stains, that yet obscur’d our lowly blood,
Its sway indeed was narrow, but howe’er
It wrought no evil: there, with force and lies,
Began its rapine; after, for amends,
Poitou it seiz’d, Navarre and Gascony.
To Italy came Charles, and for amends
Young Conradine an innocent victim slew,
And sent th’ angelic teacher back to heav’n,
Still for amends. I see the time at hand,
That forth from France invites another Charles
To make himself and kindred better known.
Unarm’d he issues, saving with that lance,

Which the arch-traitor tilted with; and that
He carries with so home a thrust, as rives
The bowels of poor Florence. No increase
Of territory hence, but sin and shame
Shall be his guerdon, and so much the more
As he more lightly deems of such foul wrong.
I see the other, who a prisoner late
Had steps on shore, exposing to the mart
His daughter, whom he bargains for, as do
The Corsairs for their slaves. O avarice!
What canst thou more, who hast subdued our blood
So wholly to thyself, they feel no care
Of their own flesh? To hide with direr guilt
Past ill and future, lo! the flower-de-luce
Enters Alagna! in his Vicar Christ
Himself a captive, and his mockery
Acted again! Lo! lo his holy lip
The vinegar and gall once more applied!
And he ‘twixt living robbers doom’d to bleed!
Lo! the new Pilate, of whose cruelty
Such violence cannot fill the measure up,
With no degree to sanction, pushes on
Into the temple his yet eager sails!

“O sovran Master! when shall I rejoice
To see the vengeance, which thy wrath well-pleas’d
In secret silence broods? — While daylight lasts,
So long what thou didst hear of her, sole spouse
Of the Great Spirit, and on which thou turn’dst
To me for comment, is the general theme
Of all our prayers: but when it darkens, then
A different strain we utter, then record
Pygmalion, whom his gluttonous thirst of gold
Made traitor, robber, parricide: the woes
Of Midas, which his greedy wish ensued,
Mark’d for derision to all future times:
And the fond Achan, how he stole the prey,
That yet he seems by Joshua’s ire pursued.
Sapphira with her husband next, we blame;

And praise the forefeet, that with furious ramp
Spurn'd Heliodorus. All the mountain round
Rings with the infamy of Thracia's king,
Who slew his Phrygian charge: and last a shout
Ascends: "Declare, O Crassus! for thou know'st,
The flavour of thy gold." The voice of each
Now high now low, as each his impulse prompts,
Is led through many a pitch, acute or grave.
Therefore, not singly, I erewhile rehears'd
That blessedness we tell of in the day:
But near me none beside his accent rais'd."

From him we now had parted, and essay'd
With utmost efforts to surmount the way,
When I did feel, as nodding to its fall,
The mountain tremble; whence an icy chill
Seiz'd on me, as on one to death convey'd.
So shook not Delos, when Latona there
Couch'd to bring forth the twin-born eyes of heaven.

Forthwith from every side a shout arose
So vehement, that suddenly my guide
Drew near, and cried: "Doubt not, while I conduct thee."
"Glory!" all shouted (such the sounds mine ear
Gather'd from those, who near me swell'd the sounds)
"Glory in the highest be to God." We stood
Immovably suspended, like to those,
The shepherds, who first heard in Bethlehem's field
That song: till ceas'd the trembling, and the song
Was ended: then our hallow'd path resum'd,
Eying the prostrate shadows, who renew'd
Their custom'd mourning. Never in my breast
Did ignorance so struggle with desire
Of knowledge, if my memory do not err,
As in that moment; nor through haste dar'd I
To question, nor myself could aught discern,
So on I far'd in thoughtfulness and dread.

CANTO XXI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

The natural thirst, ne'er quench'd but from the well,
Whereof the woman of Samaria crav'd,
Excited: haste along the cumber'd path,
After my guide, impell'd; and pity mov'd
My bosom for the 'vengeful deed, though just.
When lo! even as Luke relates, that Christ
Appear'd unto the two upon their way,
New-risen from his vaulted grave; to us
A shade appear'd, and after us approach'd,
Contemplating the crowd beneath its feet.
We were not ware of it; so first it spake,
Saying, "God give you peace, my brethren!" then
Sudden we turn'd: and Virgil such salute,
As fitted that kind greeting, gave, and cried:
"Peace in the blessed council be thy lot
Awarded by that righteous court, which me
To everlasting banishment exiles!"

"How!" he exclaim'd, nor from his speed meanwhile
Desisting, "If that ye be spirits, whom God
Vouchsafes not room above, who up the height
Has been thus far your guide?" To whom the bard:
"If thou observe the tokens, which this man
Trac'd by the finger of the angel bears,
'Tis plain that in the kingdom of the just
He needs must share. But sithence she, whose wheel
Spins day and night, for him not yet had drawn
That yarn, which, on the fatal distaff pil'd,
Clotho apportions to each wight that breathes,
His soul, that sister is to mine and thine,
Not of herself could mount, for not like ours
Her ken: whence I, from forth the ample gulf
Of hell was ta'en, to lead him, and will lead
Far as my lore avails. But, if thou know,

Instruct us for what cause, the mount erewhile
Thus shook and trembled: wherefore all at once
Seem'd shouting, even from his wave-wash'd foot."

That questioning so tallied with my wish,
The thirst did feel abatement of its edge
E'en from expectance. He forthwith replied,
"In its devotion nought irregular
This mount can witness, or by punctual rule
Unsanction'd; here from every change exempt.
Other than that, which heaven in itself
Doth of itself receive, no influence
Can reach us. Tempest none, shower, hail or snow,
Hoar frost or dewy moistness, higher falls
Than that brief scale of threefold steps: thick clouds
Nor scudding rack are ever seen: swift glance
Ne'er lightens, nor Thaumantian Iris gleams,
That yonder often shift on each side heav'n.
Vapour adust doth never mount above
The highest of the trinal stairs, whereon
Peter's vicegerent stands. Lower perchance,
With various motion rock'd, trembles the soil:
But here, through wind in earth's deep hollow pent,
I know not how, yet never trembled: then
Trembles, when any spirit feels itself
So purified, that it may rise, or move
For rising, and such loud acclaim ensues.
Purification by the will alone
Is prov'd, that free to change society
Seizes the soul rejoicing in her will.
Desire of bliss is present from the first;
But strong propension hinders, to that wish
By the just ordinance of heav'n oppos'd;
Propension now as eager to fulfil
Th' allotted torment, as erewhile to sin.
And I who in this punishment had lain
Five hundred years and more, but now have felt
Free wish for happier clime. Therefore thou felt'st
The mountain tremble, and the spirits devout

Heard’st, over all his limits, utter praise
To that liege Lord, whom I entreat their joy
To hasten.” Thus he spake: and since the draught
Is grateful ever as the thirst is keen,
No words may speak my fullness of content.

“Now,” said the instructor sage, “I see the net
That takes ye here, and how the toils are loos’d,
Why rocks the mountain and why ye rejoice.
Vouchsafe, that from thy lips I next may learn,
Who on the earth thou wast, and wherefore here
So many an age wert prostrate.”— “In that time,
When the good Titus, with Heav’n’s King to help,
Aveng’d those piteous gashes, whence the blood
By Judas sold did issue, with the name
Most lasting and most honour’d there was I
Abundantly renown’d,” the shade reply’d,
“Not yet with faith endued. So passing sweet
My vocal Spirit, from Tolosa, Rome
To herself drew me, where I merited
A myrtle garland to inwreathe my brow.
Statius they name me still. Of Thebes I sang,
And next of great Achilles: but i’ th’ way
Fell with the second burthen. Of my flame
Those sparkles were the seeds, which I deriv’d
From the bright fountain of celestial fire
That feeds unnumber’d lamps, the song I mean
Which sounds Aeneas’ wand’rings: that the breast
I hung at, that the nurse, from whom my veins
Drank inspiration: whose authority
Was ever sacred with me. To have liv’d
Coeval with the Mantuan, I would bide
The revolution of another sun
Beyond my stated years in banishment.”

The Mantuan, when he heard him, turn’d to me,
And holding silence: by his countenance
Enjoin’d me silence but the power which wills,
Bears not supreme control: laughter and tears

Follow so closely on the passion prompts them,
They wait not for the motions of the will
In natures most sincere. I did but smile,
As one who winks; and thereupon the shade
Broke off, and peer'd into mine eyes, where best
Our looks interpret. "So to good event
Mayst thou conduct such great emprize," he cried,
"Say, why across thy visage beam'd, but now,
The lightning of a smile!" On either part
Now am I straiten'd; one conjures me speak,
Th' other to silence binds me: whence a sigh
I utter, and the sigh is heard. "Speak on;"
The teacher cried; "and do not fear to speak,
But tell him what so earnestly he asks."
Whereon I thus: "Perchance, O ancient spirit!
Thou marvel'st at my smiling. There is room
For yet more wonder. He who guides my ken
On high, he is that Mantuan, led by whom
Thou didst presume of men and gods to sing.
If other cause thou deem'dst for which I smil'd,
Leave it as not the true one; and believe
Those words, thou spak'st of him, indeed the cause."

Now down he bent t' embrace my teacher's feet;
But he forbade him: "Brother! do it not:
Thou art a shadow, and behold'st a shade."
He rising answer'd thus: "Now hast thou prov'd
The force and ardour of the love I bear thee,
When I forget we are but things of air,
And as a substance treat an empty shade."

CANTO XXII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now we had left the angel, who had turn'd
To the sixth circle our ascending step,
One gash from off my forehead raz'd: while they,
Whose wishes tend to justice, shouted forth:
"Blessed!" and ended with, "I thirst:" and I,
More nimble than along the other straits,
So journey'd, that, without the sense of toil,
I follow'd upward the swift-footed shades;
When Virgil thus began: "Let its pure flame
From virtue flow, and love can never fail
To warm another's bosom' so the light
Shine manifestly forth. Hence from that hour,
When 'mongst us in the purlieus of the deep,
Came down the spirit of Aquinum's hard,
Who told of thine affection, my good will
Hath been for thee of quality as strong
As ever link'd itself to one not seen.
Therefore these stairs will now seem short to me.
But tell me: and if too secure I loose
The rein with a friend's license, as a friend
Forgive me, and speak now as with a friend:
How chanc'd it covetous desire could find
Place in that bosom, 'midst such ample store
Of wisdom, as thy zeal had treasur'd there?"

First somewhat mov'd to laughter by his words,
Statius replied: "Each syllable of thine
Is a dear pledge of love. Things oft appear
That minister false matters to our doubts,
When their true causes are remov'd from sight.
Thy question doth assure me, thou believ'st
I was on earth a covetous man, perhaps
Because thou found'st me in that circle plac'd.
Know then I was too wide of avarice:

And e'en for that excess, thousands of moons
Have wax'd and wan'd upon my sufferings.
And were it not that I with heedful care
Noted where thou exclaim'st as if in ire
With human nature, 'Why, thou cursed thirst
Of gold! dost not with juster measure guide
The appetite of mortals?' I had met
The fierce encounter of the voluble rock.
Then was I ware that with too ample wing
The hands may haste to lavishment, and turn'd,
As from my other evil, so from this
In penitence. How many from their grave
Shall with shorn locks arise, who living, aye
And at life's last extreme, of this offence,
Through ignorance, did not repent. And know,
The fault which lies direct from any sin
In level opposition, here With that
Wastes its green rankness on one common heap.
Therefore if I have been with those, who wail
Their avarice, to cleanse me, through reverse
Of their transgression, such hath been my lot."

To whom the sovran of the pastoral song:
"While thou didst sing that cruel warfare wag'd
By the twin sorrow of Jocasta's womb,
From thy discourse with Clio there, it seems
As faith had not been shine: without the which
Good deeds suffice not. And if so, what sun
Rose on thee, or what candle pierc'd the dark
That thou didst after see to hoist the sail,
And follow, where the fisherman had led?"

He answering thus: "By thee conducted first,
I enter'd the Parnassian grots, and quaff'd
Of the clear spring; illumin'd first by thee
Open'd mine eyes to God. Thou didst, as one,
Who, journeying through the darkness, hears a light
Behind, that profits not himself, but makes
His followers wise, when thou exclaimedst, 'Lo!

A renovated world! Justice return'd!
Times of primeval innocence restor'd!
And a new race descended from above!'
Poet and Christian both to thee I owed.
That thou mayst mark more clearly what I trace,
My hand shall stretch forth to inform the lines
With livelier colouring. Soon o'er all the world,
By messengers from heav'n, the true belief
Teem'd now prolific, and that word of thine
Accordant, to the new instructors chim'd.
Induc'd by which agreement, I was wont
Resort to them; and soon their sanctity
So won upon me, that, Domitian's rage
Pursuing them, I mix'd my tears with theirs,
And, while on earth I stay'd, still succour'd them;
And their most righteous customs made me scorn
All sects besides. Before I led the Greeks
In tuneful fiction, to the streams of Thebes,
I was baptiz'd; but secretly, through fear,
Remain'd a Christian, and conform'd long time
To Pagan rites. Five centuries and more,
T for that lukewarmness was fain to pace
Round the fourth circle. Thou then, who hast rais'd
The covering, which did hide such blessing from me,
Whilst much of this ascent is yet to climb,
Say, if thou know, where our old Terence bides,
Caecilius, Plautus, Varro: if condemn'd
They dwell, and in what province of the deep."
"These," said my guide, "with Persius and myself,
And others many more, are with that Greek,
Of mortals, the most cherish'd by the Nine,
In the first ward of darkness. There ofttimes
We of that mount hold converse, on whose top
For aye our nurses live. We have the bard
Of Pella, and the Teian, Agatho,
Simonides, and many a Grecian else
Ingarlanded with laurel. Of thy train
Antigone is there, Deiphile,
Argia, and as sorrowful as erst

Ismene, and who show'd Langia's wave:
Deidamia with her sisters there,
And blind Tiresias' daughter, and the bride
Sea-born of Peleus." Either poet now
Was silent, and no longer by th' ascent
Or the steep walls obstructed, round them cast
Inquiring eyes. Four handmaids of the day
Had finish'd now their office, and the fifth
Was at the chariot-beam, directing still
Its balmy point aloof, when thus my guide:
"Methinks, it well behooves us to the brink
Bend the right shoulder' circuiting the mount,
As we have ever us'd." So custom there
Was usher to the road, the which we chose
Less doubtful, as that worthy shade complied.

They on before me went; I sole pursued,
List'ning their speech, that to my thoughts convey'd
Mysterious lessons of sweet poesy.
But soon they ceas'd; for midway of the road
A tree we found, with goodly fruitage hung,
And pleasant to the smell: and as a fir
Upward from bough to bough less ample spreads,
So downward this less ample spread, that none.
Methinks, aloft may climb. Upon the side,
That clos'd our path, a liquid crystal fell
From the steep rock, and through the sprays above
Stream'd showering. With associate step the bards
Drew near the plant; and from amidst the leaves
A voice was heard: "Ye shall be chary of me;"
And after added: "Mary took more thought
For joy and honour of the nuptial feast,
Than for herself who answers now for you.
The women of old Rome were satisfied
With water for their beverage. Daniel fed
On pulse, and wisdom gain'd. The primal age
Was beautiful as gold; and hunger then
Made acorns tasteful, thirst each rivulet
Run nectar. Honey and locusts were the food,

Whereon the Baptist in the wilderness
Fed, and that eminence of glory reach'd
And greatness, which the' Evangelist records."

CANTO XXIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

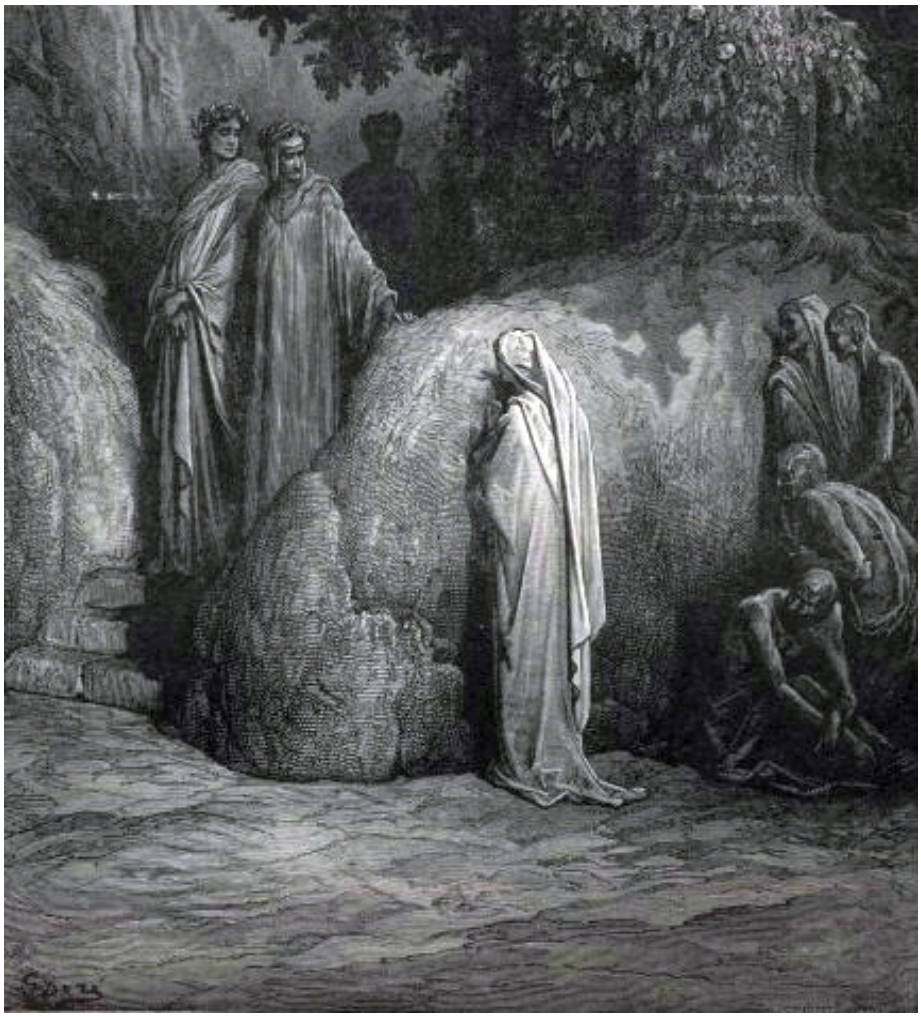
On the green leaf mine eyes were fix'd, like his
Who throws away his days in idle chase
Of the diminutive, when thus I heard
The more than father warn me: "Son! our time
Asks thriftier using. Linger not: away."

Thereat my face and steps at once I turn'd
Toward the sages, by whose converse cheer'd
I journey'd on, and felt no toil: and lo!
A sound of weeping and a song: "My lips,
O Lord!" and these so mingled, it gave birth
To pleasure and to pain. "O Sire, belov'd!
Say what is this I hear?" Thus I inquir'd.

"Spirits," said he, "who as they go, perchance,
Their debt of duty pay." As on their road
The thoughtful pilgrims, overtaking some
Not known unto them, turn to them, and look,
But stay not; thus, approaching from behind
With speedier motion, eyed us, as they pass'd,
A crowd of spirits, silent and devout.
The eyes of each were dark and hollow: pale
Their visage, and so lean withal, the bones
Stood staring thro' the skin. I do not think
Thus dry and meagre Erisicthon show'd,
When pinc'ed by sharp-set famine to the quick.

"Lo!" to myself I mus'd, "the race, who lost
Jerusalem, when Mary with dire beak
Prey'd on her child." The sockets seem'd as rings,
From which the gems were drops. Who reads the name
Of man upon his forehead, there the M
Had trac'd most plainly. Who would deem, that scent
Of water and an apple, could have prov'd
Powerful to generate such pining want,

Not knowing how it wrought? While now I stood
Wond'ring what thus could waste them (for the cause
Of their gaunt hollowness and scaly rind
Appear'd not) lo! a spirit turn'd his eyes
In their deep-sunken cell, and fasten'd then
On me, then cried with vehemence aloud:
"What grace is this vouchsaf'd me?" By his looks
I ne'er had recogniz'd him: but the voice
Brought to my knowledge what his cheer conceal'd.
Remembrance of his alter'd lineaments
Was kindled from that spark; and I agniz'd
The visage of Forese. "Ah! respect
This wan and leprous wither'd skin," thus he
Suppliant implor'd, "this macerated flesh.
Speak to me truly of thyself. And who
Are those twain spirits, that escort thee there?
Be it not said thou Scorn'st to talk with me."



“That face of thine,” I answer’d him, “which dead
I once bewail’d, disposes me not less
For weeping, when I see It thus transform’d.
Say then, by Heav’n, what blasts ye thus? The whilst
I wonder, ask not Speech from me: unapt
Is he to speak, whom other will employs.”

He thus: “The water and tee plant we pass’d,
Virtue possesses, by th’ eternal will
Infus’d, the which so pines me. Every spirit,
Whose song bewails his gluttony indulg’d
Too grossly, here in hunger and in thirst
Is purified. The odour, which the fruit,
And spray, that showers upon the verdure, breathe,
Inflames us with desire to feed and drink.

Nor once alone encompassing our route
We come to add fresh fuel to the pain:
Pain, said I? solace rather: for that will
To the tree leads us, by which Christ was led
To call Elias, joyful when he paid
Our ransom from his vein." I answering thus:
"Forese! from that day, in which the world
For better life thou changedst, not five years
Have circled. If the power of sinning more
Were first concluded in thee, ere thou knew'st
That kindly grief, which re-espouses us
To God, how hither art thou come so soon?
I thought to find thee lower, there, where time
Is recompense for time." He straight replied:
"To drink up the sweet wormwood of affliction
I have been brought thus early by the tears
Stream'd down my Nella's cheeks. Her prayers devout,
Her sighs have drawn me from the coast, where oft
Expectance lingers, and have set me free
From th' other circles. In the sight of God
So much the dearer is my widow priz'd,
She whom I lov'd so fondly, as she ranks
More singly eminent for virtuous deeds.
The tract most barb'rous of Sardinia's isle,
Hath dames more chaste and modester by far
Than that wherein I left her. O sweet brother!
What wouldst thou have me say? A time to come
Stands full within my view, to which this hour
Shall not be counted of an ancient date,
When from the pulpit shall be loudly warn'd
Th' unblushing dames of Florence, lest they bare
Unkerchief'd bosoms to the common gaze.
What savage women hath the world e'er seen,
What Saracens, for whom there needed scourge
Of spiritual or other discipline,
To force them walk with cov'ring on their limbs!
But did they see, the shameless ones, that Heav'n
Wafts on swift wing toward them, while I speak,
Their mouths were op'd for howling: they shall taste

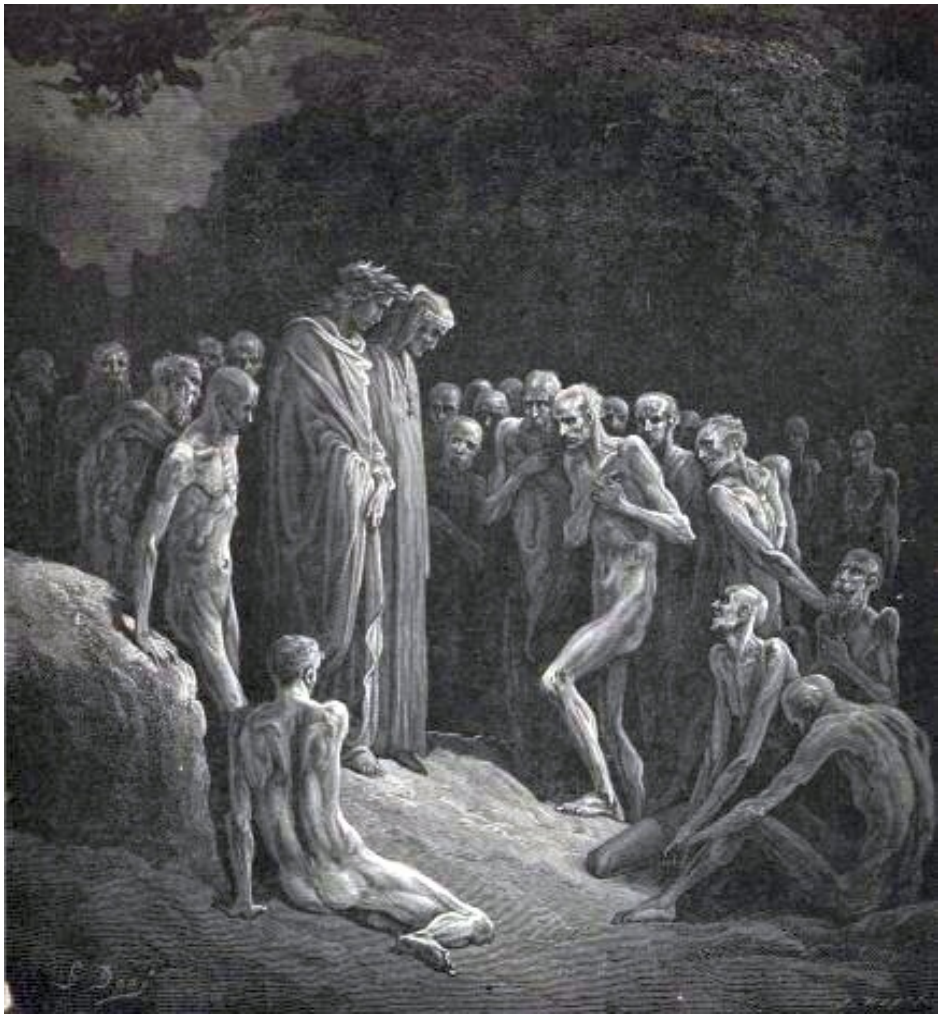
Of Borrow (unless foresight cheat me here)
Or ere the cheek of him be cloth'd with down
Who is now rock'd with lullaby asleep.
Ah! now, my brother, hide thyself no more,
Thou seest how not I alone but all
Gaze, where thou veil'st the intercepted sun."

Whence I replied: "If thou recall to mind
What we were once together, even yet
Remembrance of those days may grieve thee sore.
That I forsook that life, was due to him
Who there precedes me, some few evenings past,
When she was round, who shines with sister lamp
To his, that glisters yonder," and I show'd
The sun. "Tis he, who through profoundest night
Of he true dead has brought me, with this flesh
As true, that follows. From that gloom the aid
Of his sure comfort drew me on to climb,
And climbing wind along this mountain-steep,
Which rectifies in you whate'er the world
Made crooked and deprav'd I have his word,
That he will bear me company as far
As till I come where Beatrice dwells:
But there must leave me. Virgil is that spirit,
Who thus hath promis'd," and I pointed to him;
"The other is that shade, for whom so late
Your realm, as he arose, exulting shook
Through every pendent cliff and rocky bound."

CANTO XXIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Our journey was not slacken'd by our talk,
Nor yet our talk by journeying. Still we spake,
And urg'd our travel stoutly, like a ship
When the wind sits astern. The shadowy forms,



That seem'd things dead and dead again, drew in
At their deep-delved orbs rare wonder of me,
Perceiving I had life; and I my words
Continued, and thus spake; "He journeys up
Perhaps more tardily then else he would,
For others' sake. But tell me, if thou know'st,

Where is Piccarda? Tell me, if I see
Any of mark, among this multitude,
Who eye me thus."— "My sister (she for whom,
'Twixt beautiful and good I cannot say
Which name was fitter) wears e'en now her crown,
And triumphs in Olympus." Saying this,
He added: "Since spare diet hath so worn
Our semblance out, 't is lawful here to name
Each one. This," and his finger then he rais'd,
"Is Buonaggiuna, — Buonaggiuna, he
Of Lucca: and that face beyond him, pierc'd
Unto a leaner fineness than the rest,
Had keeping of the church: he was of Tours,
And purges by wan abstinence away
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel."

He show'd me many others, one by one,
And all, as they were nam'd, seem'd well content;
For no dark gesture I discern'd in any.
I saw through hunger Ubaldino grind
His teeth on emptiness; and Boniface,
That wav'd the crozier o'er a num'rous flock.
I saw the Marquis, who tad time erewhile
To swill at Forli with less drought, yet so
Was one ne'er sated. I howe'er, like him,
That gazing 'midst a crowd, singles out one,
So singled him of Lucca; for methought
Was none amongst them took such note of me.
Somewhat I heard him whisper of Gentucca:
The sound was indistinct, and murmur'd there,
Where justice, that so strips them, fix'd her sting.

"Spirit!" said I, "it seems as thou wouldst fain
Speak with me. Let me hear thee. Mutual wish
To converse prompts, which let us both indulge."

He, answ'ring, straight began: "Woman is born,
Whose brow no wimple shades yet, that shall make
My city please thee, blame it as they may.

Go then with this forewarning. If aught false
My whisper too implied, th' event shall tell
But say, if of a truth I see the man
Of that new lay th' inventor, which begins
With 'Ladies, ye that con the lore of love'."

To whom I thus: "Count of me but as one
Who am the scribe of love; that, when he breathes,
Take up my pen, and, as he dictates, write."

"Brother!" said he, "the hind'rance which once held
The notary with Guittone and myself,
Short of that new and sweeter style I hear,
Is now disclos'd. I see how ye your plumes
Stretch, as th' inditer guides them; which, no question,
Ours did not. He that seeks a grace beyond,
Sees not the distance parts one style from other."
And, as contented, here he held his peace.

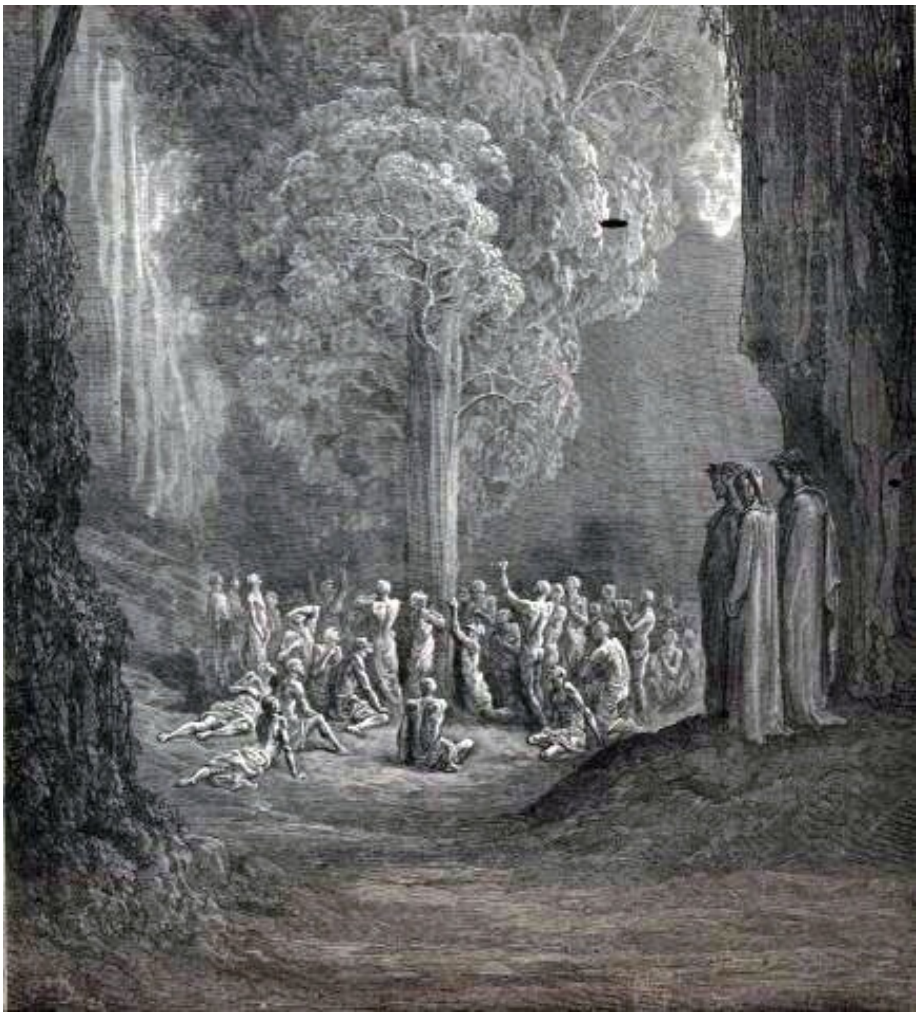
Like as the bird, that winter near the Nile,
In squared regiment direct their course,
Then stretch themselves in file for speedier flight;
Thus all the tribe of spirits, as they turn'd
Their visage, faster deaf, nimble alike
Through leanness and desire. And as a man,
Tir'd With the motion of a trotting steed,
Slacks pace, and stays behind his company,
Till his o'erbreathed lungs keep temperate time;
E'en so Forese let that holy crew
Proceed, behind them lingering at my side,
And saying: "When shall I again behold thee?"

"How long my life may last," said I, "I know not;
This know, how soon soever I return,
My wishes will before me have arriv'd.
Sithence the place, where I am set to live,
Is, day by day, more scoop'd of all its good,
And dismal ruin seems to threaten it."

“Go now,” he cried: “lo! he, whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg’d at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes, that leaveth him
A corse most vilely shatter’d. No long space
Those wheels have yet to roll” (therewith his eyes
Look’d up to heav’n) “ere thou shalt plainly see
That which my words may not more plainly tell.
I quit thee: time is precious here: I lose
Too much, thus measuring my pace with shine.”

As from a troop of well-rank’d chivalry
One knight, more enterprising than the rest,
Pricks forth at gallop, eager to display
His prowess in the first encounter prov’d
So parted he from us with lengthen’d strides,
And left me on the way with those twain spirits,
Who were such mighty marshals of the world.

When he beyond us had so fled mine eyes
No nearer reach’d him, than my thought his words,
The branches of another fruit, thick hung,
And blooming fresh, appear’d. E’en as our steps
Turn’d thither, not far off it rose to view.
Beneath it were a multitude, that rais’d
Their hands, and shouted forth I know not What
Unto the boughs; like greedy and fond brats,
That beg, and answer none obtain from him,
Of whom they beg; but more to draw them on,
He at arm’s length the object of their wish
Above them holds aloft, and hides it not.



At length, as undeceiv’d they went their way:
And we approach the tree, who vows and tears
Sue to in vain, the mighty tree. ”Pass on,
And come not near. Stands higher up the wood,
Whereof Eve tasted, and from it was ta’en
‘this plant.” Such sounds from midst the thickets came.
Whence I, with either bard, close to the side
That rose, pass’d forth beyond. ”Remember,” next
We heard, “those noblest creatures of the clouds,
How they their twofold bosoms overgorg’d
Oppos’d in fight to Theseus: call to mind
The Hebrews, how effeminate they stoop’d
To ease their thirst; whence Gideon’s ranks were thinn’d,
As he to Midian march’d adown the hills.”

Thus near one border coasting, still we heard
The sins of gluttony, with woe erewhile
Reguerdon'd. Then along the lonely path,
Once more at large, full thousand paces on
We travel'd, each contemplative and mute.

"Why pensive journey thus ye three alone?"
Thus suddenly a voice exclaim'd: whereat
I shook, as doth a scar'd and paltry beast;
Then rais'd my head to look from whence it came.

Was ne'er, in furnace, glass, or metal seen
So bright and glowing red, as was the shape
I now beheld. "If ye desire to mount,"
He cried, "here must ye turn. This way he goes,
Who goes in quest of peace." His countenance
Had dazzled me; and to my guides I fac'd
Backward, like one who walks, as sound directs.

As when, to harbinger the dawn, springs up
On freshen'd wing the air of May, and breathes
Of fragrance, all impregn'd with herb and flowers,
E'en such a wind I felt upon my front
Blow gently, and the moving of a wing
Perceiv'd, that moving shed ambrosial smell;
And then a voice: "Blessed are they, whom grace
Doth so illume, that appetite in them
Exhaleth no inordinate desire,
Still hung'ring as the rule of temperance wills."

CANTO XXV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

It was an hour, when he who climbs, had need
To walk uncrippled: for the sun had now
To Taurus the meridian circle left,
And to the Scorpion left the night. As one
That makes no pause, but presses on his road,
Whate'er betide him, if some urgent need
Impel: so enter'd we upon our way,
One before other; for, but singly, none
That steep and narrow scale admits to climb.

E'en as the young stork lifteth up his wing
Through wish to fly, yet ventures not to quit
The nest, and drops it; so in me desire
Of questioning my guide arose, and fell,
Arriving even to the act, that marks
A man prepar'd for speech. Him all our haste
Restrain'd not, but thus spake the sire belov'd:
"Fear not to speed the shaft, that on thy lip
Stands trembling for its flight." Encourag'd thus
I straight began: "How there can leanness come,
Where is no want of nourishment to feed?"

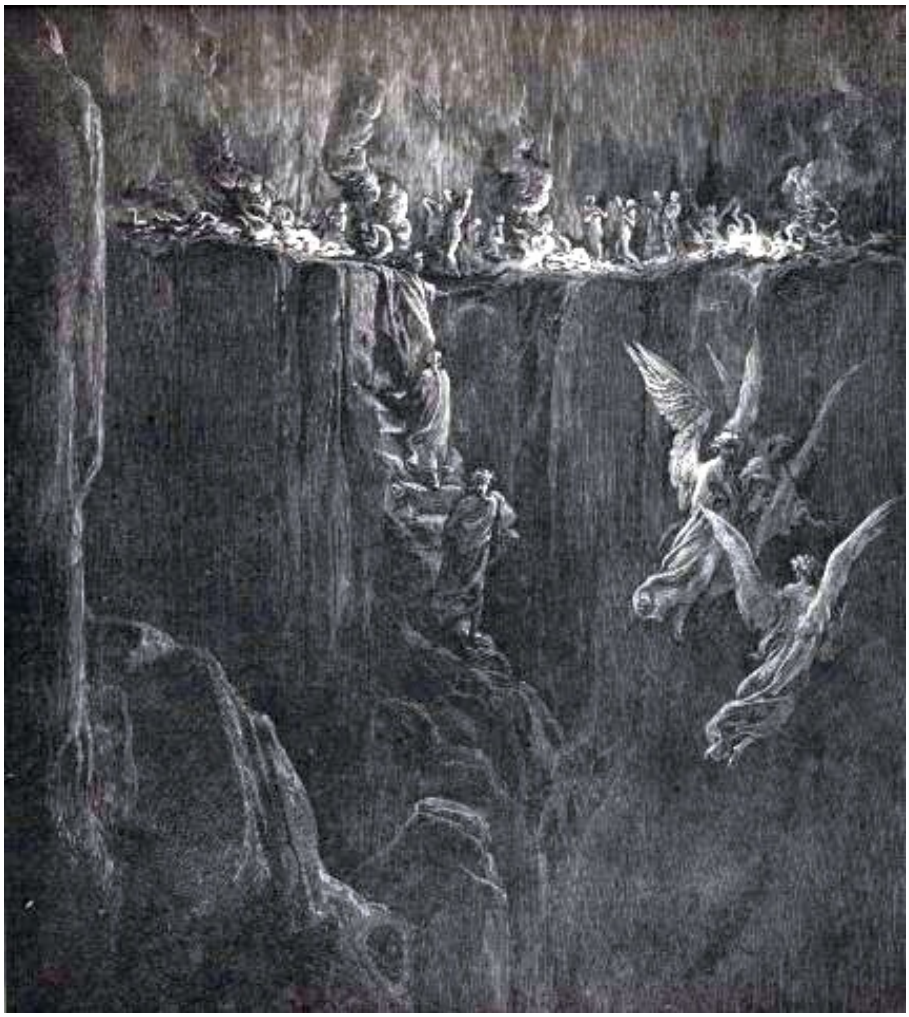
"If thou," he answer'd, "hadst remember'd thee,
How Meleager with the wasting brand
Wasted alike, by equal fires consum'd,
This would not trouble thee: and hadst thou thought,
How in the mirror your reflected form
With mimic motion vibrates, what now seems
Hard, had appear'd no harder than the pulp
Of summer fruit mature. But that thy will
In certainty may find its full repose,
Lo Statius here! on him I call, and pray
That he would now be healer of thy wound."

“If in thy presence I unfold to him
The secrets of heaven’s vengeance, let me plead
Thine own injunction, to exculpate me.”
So Statius answer’d, and forthwith began:
“Attend my words, O son, and in thy mind
Receive them: so shall they be light to clear
The doubt thou offer’st. Blood, concocted well,
Which by the thirsty veins is ne’er imbib’d,
And rests as food superfluous, to be ta’en
From the replenish’d table, in the heart
Derives effectual virtue, that informs
The several human limbs, as being that,
Which passes through the veins itself to make them.
Yet more concocted it descends, where shame
Forbids to mention: and from thence distils
In natural vessel on another’s blood.
Then each unite together, one dispos’d
T’ endure, to act the other, through meet frame
Of its recipient mould: that being reach’d,
It ‘gins to work, coagulating first;
Then vivifies what its own substance caus’d
To bear. With animation now indued,
The active virtue (differing from a plant
No further, than that this is on the way
And at its limit that) continues yet
To operate, that now it moves, and feels,
As sea sponge clinging to the rock: and there
Assumes th’ organic powers its seed convey’d.
‘This is the period, son! at which the virtue,
That from the generating heart proceeds,
Is pliant and expansive; for each limb
Is in the heart by forgeful nature plann’d.
How babe of animal becomes, remains
For thy consid’ring. At this point, more wise,
Than thou hast err’d, making the soul disjoin’d
From passive intellect, because he saw
No organ for the latter’s use assign’d.

“Open thy bosom to the truth that comes.

Know soon as in the embryo, to the brain,
Articulation is complete, then turns
The primal Mover with a smile of joy
On such great work of nature, and imbreathes
New spirit replete with virtue, that what here
Active it finds, to its own substance draws,
And forms an individual soul, that lives,
And feels, and bends reflective on itself.
And that thou less mayst marvel at the word,
Mark the sun's heat, how that to wine doth change,
Mix'd with the moisture filter'd through the vine.

"When Lachesis hath spun the thread, the soul
Takes with her both the human and divine,
Memory, intelligence, and will, in act
Far keener than before, the other powers
Inactive all and mute. No pause allow'd,
In wond'rous sort self-moving, to one strand
Of those, where the departed roam, she falls,
Here learns her destin'd path. Soon as the place
Receives her, round the plastic virtue beams,
Distinct as in the living limbs before:
And as the air, when saturate with showers,
The casual beam refracting, decks itself
With many a hue; so here the ambient air
Weareth that form, which influence of the soul
Imprints on it; and like the flame, that where
The fire moves, thither follows, so henceforth
The new form on the spirit follows still:
Hence hath it semblance, and is shadow call'd,
With each sense even to the sight endued:
Hence speech is ours, hence laughter, tears, and sighs
Which thou mayst oft have witness'd on the mount
Th' obedient shadow fails not to present
Whatever varying passion moves within us.
And this the cause of what thou marvel'st at."

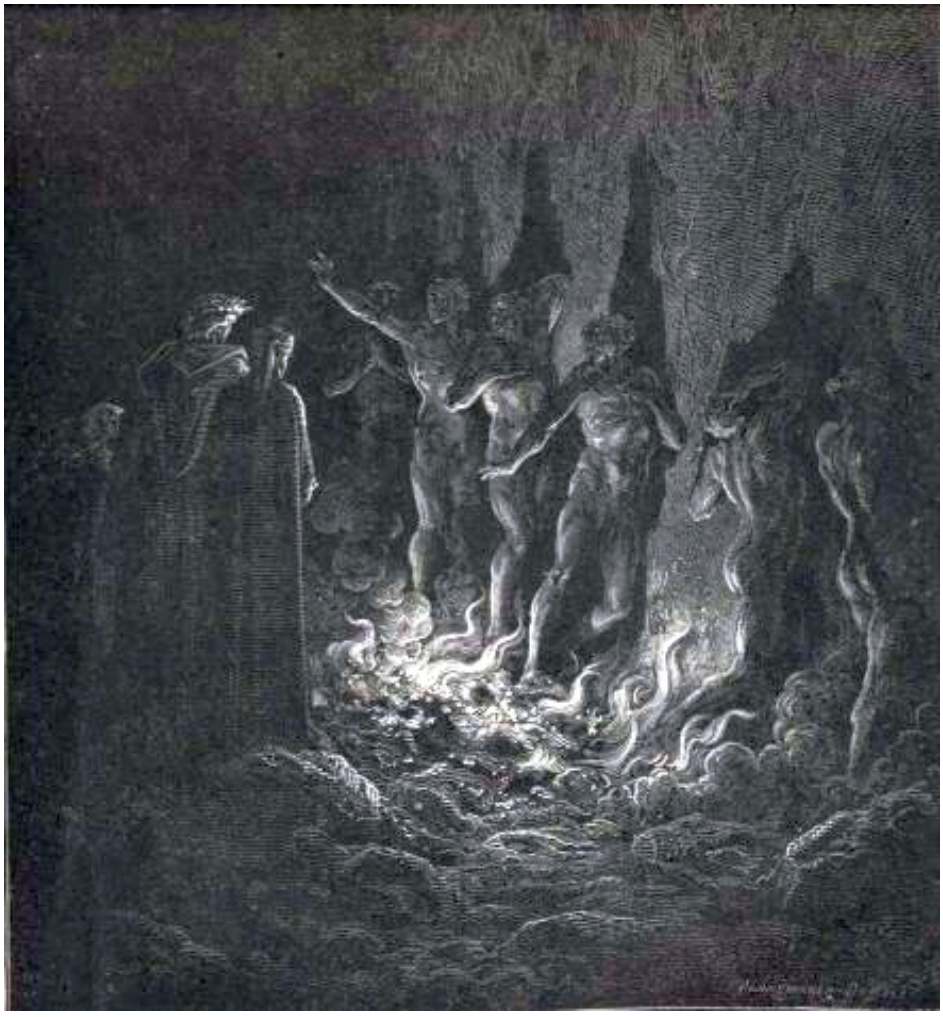


Now the last flexure of our way we reach’d,
And to the right hand turning, other care
Awaits us. Here the rocky precipice
Hurls forth redundant flames, and from the rim
A blast upblown, with forcible rebuff
Driveth them back, sequester’d from its bound.

Behoov’d us, one by one, along the side,
That border’d on the void, to pass; and I
Fear’d on one hand the fire, on th’ other fear’d
Headlong to fall: when thus th’ instructor warn’d:
“Strict rein must in this place direct the eyes.
A little swerving and the way is lost.”

Then from the bosom of the burning mass,
“O God of mercy!” heard I sung; and felt
No less desire to turn. And when I saw
Spirits along the flame proceeding, I
Between their footsteps and mine own was fain
To share by turns my view. At the hymn’s close
They shouted loud, “I do not know a man;”
Then in low voice again took up the strain,
Which once more ended, “To the wood,” they cried,
“Ran Dian, and drave forth Callisto, stung
With Cytherea’s poison:” then return’d
Unto their song; then marry a pair extoll’d,
Who liv’d in virtue chastely, and the bands
Of wedded love. Nor from that task, I ween,
Surcease they; whilesoe’er the scorching fire

Enclasps them. Of such skill appliance needs
To medicine the wound, that healeth last.



CANTO XXVI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

While singly thus along the rim we walk'd,
Oft the good master warn'd me: "Look thou well.
Avail it that I caution thee." The sun
Now all the western clime irradiate chang'd
From azure tinct to white; and, as I pass'd,
My passing shadow made the umber'd flame
Burn ruddier. At so strange a sight I mark'd
That many a spirit marvel'd on his way.

This bred occasion first to speak of me,
"He seems," said they, "no insubstantial frame:"
Then to obtain what certainty they might,
Stretch'd towards me, careful not to overpass
The burning pale. "O thou, who followest
The others, haply not more slow than they,
But mov'd by rev'rence, answer me, who burn
In thirst and fire: nor I alone, but these
All for thine answer do more thirst, than doth
Indian or Aethiop for the cooling stream.
Tell us, how is it that thou mak'st thyself
A wall against the sun, as thou not yet
Into th' inextricable toils of death
Hadst enter'd?" Thus spake one, and I had straight
Declar'd me, if attention had not turn'd
To new appearance. Meeting these, there came,
Midway the burning path, a crowd, on whom
Earnestly gazing, from each part I view
The shadows all press forward, sev'rally
Each snatch a hasty kiss, and then away.
E'en so the emmets, 'mid their dusky troops,
Peer closely one at other, to spy out
Their mutual road perchance, and how they thrive.

That friendly greeting parted, ere dispatch
Of the first onward step, from either tribe

Loud clamour rises: those, who newly come,
Shout "Sodom and Gomorrah!" these, "The cow
Pasiphae enter'd, that the beast she woo'd
Might rush unto her luxury." Then as cranes,
That part towards the Riphaean mountains fly,
Part towards the Lybic sands, these to avoid
The ice, and those the sun; so hasteth off
One crowd, advances th' other; and resume
Their first song weeping, and their several shout.

Again drew near my side the very same,
Who had erewhile besought me, and their looks
Mark'd eagerness to listen. I, who twice
Their will had noted, spake: "O spirits secure,
Whene'er the time may be, of peaceful end!
My limbs, nor crude, nor in mature old age,
Have I left yonder: here they bear me, fed
With blood, and sinew-strung. That I no more
May live in blindness, hence I tend aloft.
There is a dame on high, who wind for us
This grace, by which my mortal through your realm
I bear. But may your utmost wish soon meet
Such full fruition, that the orb of heaven,
Fullest of love, and of most ample space,
Receive you, as ye tell (upon my page
Henceforth to stand recorded) who ye are,
And what this multitude, that at your backs
Have past behind us." As one, mountain-bred,
Rugged and clownish, if some city's walls
He chance to enter, round him stares agape,
Confounded and struck dumb; e'en such appear'd
Each spirit. But when rid of that amaze,
(Not long the inmate of a noble heart)
He, who before had question'd, thus resum'd:
"O blessed, who, for death preparing, tak'st
Experience of our limits, in thy bark!
Their crime, who not with us proceed, was that,
For which, as he did triumph, Caesar heard
The snout of 'queen,' to taunt him. Hence their cry

Of ‘Sodom,’ as they parted, to rebuke
Themselves, and aid the burning by their shame.
Our sinning was Hermaphrodite: but we,
Because the law of human kind we broke,
Following like beasts our vile concupiscence,
Hence parting from them, to our own disgrace
Record the name of her, by whom the beast
In bestial tire was acted. Now our deeds
Thou know’st, and how we sinn’d. If thou by name
Wouldst haply know us, time permits not now
To tell so much, nor can I. Of myself
Learn what thou wishest. Guinicelli I,
Who having truly sorrow’d ere my last,
Already cleanse me.” With such pious joy,
As the two sons upon their mother gaz’d
From sad Lycurgus rescu’d, such my joy
(Save that I more represt it) when I heard
From his own lips the name of him pronounc’d,
Who was a father to me, and to those
My betters, who have ever us’d the sweet
And pleasant rhymes of love. So nought I heard
Nor spake, but long time thoughtfully I went,
Gazing on him; and, only for the fire,
Approach’d not nearer. When my eyes were fed
By looking on him, with such solemn pledge,
As forces credence, I devoted me
Unto his service wholly. In reply
He thus bespake me: “What from thee I hear
Is grav’d so deeply on my mind, the waves
Of Lethe shall not wash it off, nor make
A whit less lively. But as now thy oath
Has seal’d the truth, declare what cause impels
That love, which both thy looks and speech bewray.”

“Those dulcet lays,” I answer’d, “which, as long
As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
Shall make us love the very ink that trac’d them.”

“Brother!” he cried, and pointed at a shade
Before him, “there is one, whose mother speech
Doth owe to him a fairer ornament.
He in love ditties and the tales of prose
Without a rival stands, and lets the fools
Talk on, who think the songster of Limoges
O’ertops him. Rumour and the popular voice
They look to more than truth, and so confirm
Opinion, ere by art or reason taught.
Thus many of the elder time cried up
Guittone, giving him the prize, till truth
By strength of numbers vanquish’d. If thou own
So ample privilege, as to have gain’d
Free entrance to the cloister, whereof Christ
Is Abbot of the college, say to him
One paternoster for me, far as needs
For dwellers in this world, where power to sin
No longer tempts us.” Haply to make way
For one, that follow’d next, when that was said,
He vanish’d through the fire, as through the wave
A fish, that glances diving to the deep.

I, to the spirit he had shown me, drew
A little onward, and besought his name,
For which my heart, I said, kept gracious room.
He frankly thus began: “Thy courtesy
So wins on me, I have nor power nor will
To hide me. I am Arnault; and with songs,
Sorely lamenting for my folly past,
Thorough this ford of fire I wade, and see
The day, I hope for, smiling in my view.
I pray ye by the worth that guides ye up
Unto the summit of the scale, in time
Remember ye my suff’rings.” With such words
He disappear’d in the refining flame.

CANTO XXVII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now was the sun so station'd, as when first
His early radiance quivers on the heights,
Where stream'd his Maker's blood, while Libra hangs
Above Hesperian Ebro, and new fires
Meridian flash on Ganges' yellow tide.

So day was sinking, when the' angel of God
Appear'd before us. Joy was in his mien.
Forth of the flame he stood upon the brink,
And with a voice, whose lively clearness far
Surpass'd our human, "Blessed are the pure
In heart," he Sang: then near him as we came,
"Go ye not further, holy spirits!" he cried,
"Ere the fire pierce you: enter in; and list
Attentive to the song ye hear from thence."

I, when I heard his saying, was as one
Laid in the grave. My hands together clasp'd,
And upward stretching, on the fire I look'd,
And busy fancy conjur'd up the forms
Erewhile beheld alive consum'd in flames.

Th' escorting spirits turn'd with gentle looks
Toward me, and the Mantuan spake: "My son,
Here torment thou mayst feel, but canst not death.
Remember thee, remember thee, if I
Safe e'en on Geryon brought thee: now I come
More near to God, wilt thou not trust me now?
Of this be sure: though in its womb that flame
A thousand years contain'd thee, from thy head
No hair should perish. If thou doubt my truth,
Approach, and with thy hands thy vesture's hem
Stretch forth, and for thyself confirm belief.
Lay now all fear, O lay all fear aside.

Turn hither, and come onward undismay'd."
I still, though conscience urg'd' no step advanc'd.

When still he saw me fix'd and obstinate,
Somewhat disturb'd he cried: "Mark now, my son,
From Beatrice thou art by this wall
Divided." As at Thisbe's name the eye
Of Pyramus was open'd (when life ebb'd
Fast from his veins), and took one parting glance,
While vermeil dyed the mulberry; thus I turn'd
To my sage guide, relenting, when I heard
The name, that springs forever in my breast.

He shook his forehead; and, "How long," he said,
"Linger we now?" then smil'd, as one would smile
Upon a child, that eyes the fruit and yields.
Into the fire before me then he walk'd;
And Statius, who erewhile no little space
Had parted us, he pray'd to come behind.

I would have cast me into molten glass
To cool me, when I enter'd; so intense
Rag'd the conflagrant mass. The sire belov'd,
To comfort me, as he proceeded, still
Of Beatrice talk'd. "Her eyes," saith he,
"E'en now I seem to view." From the other side
A voice, that sang, did guide us, and the voice
Following, with heedful ear, we issued forth,
There where the path led upward. "Come," we heard,
"Come, blessed of my Father." Such the sounds,
That hail'd us from within a light, which shone
So radiant, I could not endure the view.
"The sun," it added, "hastes: and evening comes.
Delay not: ere the western sky is hung
With blackness, strive ye for the pass." Our way
Upright within the rock arose, and fac'd
Such part of heav'n, that from before my steps
The beams were shrouded of the sinking sun.

Nor many stairs were overpass, when now
By fading of the shadow we perceiv’d
The sun behind us couch’d: and ere one face
Of darkness o’er its measureless expanse
Involv’d th’ horizon, and the night her lot
Held individual, each of us had made
A stair his pallet: not that will, but power,
Had fail’d us, by the nature of that mount
Forbidden further travel. As the goats,
That late have skipp’d and wanton’d rapidly
Upon the craggy cliffs, ere they had ta’en
Their supper on the herb, now silent lie
And ruminate beneath the umbrage brown,
While noonday rages; and the goatherd leans
Upon his staff, and leaning watches them:
And as the swain, that lodges out all night
In quiet by his flock, lest beast of prey
Disperse them; even so all three abode,
I as a goat and as the shepherds they,
Close pent on either side by shelving rock.

A little glimpse of sky was seen above;
Yet by that little I beheld the stars
In magnitude and rustle shining forth
With more than wonted glory. As I lay,
Gazing on them, and in that fit of musing,
Sleep overcame me, sleep, that bringeth oft
Tidings of future hap. About the hour,
As I believe, when Venus from the east
First lighten'd on the mountain, she whose orb
Seems always glowing with the fire of love,
A lady young and beautiful, I dream'd,
Was passing o'er a lea; and, as she came,
Methought I saw her ever and anon
Bending to cull the flowers; and thus she sang:
"Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,

That I am Leah: for my brow to weave
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.
To please me at the crystal mirror, here
I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she
Before her glass abides the livelong day,
Her radiant eyes beholding, charm'd no less,
Than I with this delightful task. Her joy
In contemplation, as in labour mine."

And now as glimm'ring dawn appear'd, that breaks
More welcome to the pilgrim still, as he
Sojourns less distant on his homeward way,
Darkness from all sides fled, and with it fled
My slumber; whence I rose and saw my guide
Already risen. "That delicious fruit,
Which through so many a branch the zealous care
Of mortals roams in quest of, shall this day
Appease thy hunger." Such the words I heard
From Virgil's lip; and never greeting heard
So pleasant as the sounds. Within me straight
Desire so grew upon desire to mount,
Thenceforward at each step I felt the wings
Increasing for my flight. When we had run
O'er all the ladder to its topmost round,
As there we stood, on me the Mantuan fix'd
His eyes, and thus he spake: "Both fires, my son,
The temporal and eternal, thou hast seen,
And art arriv'd, where of itself my ken
No further reaches. I with skill and art
Thus far have drawn thee. Now thy pleasure take
For guide. Thou hast o'ercome the steeper way,
O'ercome the straighter. Lo! the sun, that darts
His beam upon thy forehead! lo! the herb,
The arboreta and flowers, which of itself
This land pours forth profuse! Till those bright eyes
With gladness come, which, weeping, made me haste
To succour thee, thou mayst or seat thee down,
Or wander where thou wilt. Expect no more
Sanction of warning voice or sign from me,

Free of thy own arbitrement to choose,
Discreet, judicious. To distrust thy sense
Were henceforth error. I invest thee then
With crown and mitre, sovereign o’er thyself.”

CANTO XXVIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Through that celestial forest, whose thick shade
With lively greenness the new-springing day
Attemper'd, eager now to roam, and search
Its limits round, forthwith I left the bank,
Along the champain leisurely my way
Pursuing, o'er the ground, that on all sides
Delicious odour breath'd. A pleasant air,
That intermitted never, never veer'd,
Smote on my temples, gently, as a wind
Of softest influence: at which the sprays,
Obedient all, lean'd trembling to that part
Where first the holy mountain casts his shade,
Yet were not so disorder'd, but that still
Upon their top the feather'd quiristers
Applied their wonted art, and with full joy
Welcom'd those hours of prime, and warbled shrill
Amid the leaves, that to their jocund lays
inept tenor; even as from branch to branch,
Along the piney forests on the shore
Of Chiassi, rolls the gath'ring melody,
When Eolus hath from his cavern loos'd
The dripping south. Already had my steps,
Though slow, so far into that ancient wood
Transported me, I could not ken the place
Where I had enter'd, when behold! my path
Was bounded by a rill, which to the left
With little rippling waters bent the grass,
That issued from its brink. On earth no wave
How clean soe'er, that would not seem to have
Some mixture in itself, compar'd with this,
Transpicuous, clear; yet darkly on it roll'd,
Darkly beneath perpetual gloom, which ne'er
Admits or sun or moon light there to shine.

My feet advanc’d not; but my wond’ring eyes
Pass’d onward, o’er the streamlet, to survey
The tender May-bloom, flush’d through many a hue,
In prodigal variety: and there,
As object, rising suddenly to view,
That from our bosom every thought beside
With the rare marvel chases, I beheld
A lady all alone, who, singing, went,
And culling flower from flower, wherewith her way
Was all o’er painted. ”Lady beautiful!
Thou, who (if looks, that use to speak the heart,
Are worthy of our trust), with love’s own beam
Dost warm thee,” thus to her my speech I fram’d:
“Ah! please thee hither towards the streamlet bend
Thy steps so near, that I may list thy song.

Beholding thee and this fair place, methinks,
I call to mind where wander'd and how look'd
Proserpine, in that season, when her child
The mother lost, and she the bloomy spring."

As when a lady, turning in the dance,
Doth foot it featly, and advances scarce
One step before the other to the ground;
Over the yellow and vermilion flowers
Thus turn'd she at my suit, most maiden-like,
Valing her sober eyes, and came so near,
That I distinctly caught the dulcet sound.
Arriving where the limped waters now
Lav'd the green sward, her eyes she deign'd to raise,
That shot such splendour on me, as I ween
Ne'er glanced from Cytherea's, when her son
Had sped his keenest weapon to her heart.
Upon the opposite bank she stood and smil'd
through her graceful fingers shifted still
The intermingling dyes, which without seed
That lofty land unbosoms. By the stream
Three paces only were we sunder'd: yet
The Hellespont, where Xerxes pass'd it o'er,
(A curb for ever to the pride of man)
Was by Leander not more hateful held
For floating, with inhospitable wave
'Twixt Sestus and Abydos, than by me
That flood, because it gave no passage thence.

"Strangers ye come, and haply in this place,
That cradled human nature in its birth,
Wond'ring, ye not without suspicion view
My smiles: but that sweet strain of psalmody,
'Thou, Lord! hast made me glad,' will give ye light,
Which may uncloud your minds. And thou, who stand'st
The foremost, and didst make thy suit to me,
Say if aught else thou wish to hear: for I
Came prompt to answer every doubt of thine."

She spake; and I replied: “I know not how
To reconcile this wave and rustling sound
Of forest leaves, with what I late have heard
Of opposite report.” She answering thus:
“I will unfold the cause, whence that proceeds,
Which makes thee wonder; and so purge the cloud
That hath enwraps thee. The First Good, whose joy
Is only in himself, created man
For happiness, and gave this goodly place,
His pledge and earnest of eternal peace.
Favour’d thus highly, through his own defect
He fell, and here made short sojourn; he fell,
And, for the bitterness of sorrow, chang’d
Laughter unblam’d and ever-new delight.
That vapours none, exhal’d from earth beneath,
Or from the waters (which, wherever heat
Attracts them, follow), might ascend thus far
To vex man’s peaceful state, this mountain rose
So high toward the heav’n, nor fears the rage
Of elements contending, from that part
Exempted, where the gate his limit bars.
Because the circumambient air throughout
With its first impulse circles still, unless
Aught interpose to cheek or thwart its course;
Upon the summit, which on every side
To visitation of th’ impassive air
Is open, doth that motion strike, and makes
Beneath its sway th’ umbrageous wood resound:
And in the shaken plant such power resides,
That it impregnates with its efficacy
The voyaging breeze, upon whose subtle plume
That wafted flies abroad; and th’ other land
Receiving (as ‘t is worthy in itself,
Or in the clime, that warms it), doth conceive,
And from its womb produces many a tree
Of various virtue. This when thou hast heard,
The marvel ceases, if in yonder earth
Some plant without apparent seed be found
To fix its fibrous stem. And further learn,

That with prolific foison of all seeds,
This holy plain is fill'd, and in itself
Bears fruit that ne'er was pluck'd on other soil.
The water, thou behold'st, springs not from vein,
As stream, that intermittently repairs
And spends his pulse of life, but issues forth
From fountain, solid, undecaying, sure;
And by the will omnific, full supply
Feeds whatsoe'er On either side it pours;
On this devolv'd with power to take away
Remembrance of offence, on that to bring
Remembrance back of every good deed done.
From whence its name of Lethe on this part;
On th' other Eunoe: both of which must first
Be tasted ere it work; the last exceeding
All flavours else. Albeit thy thirst may now
Be well contented, if I here break off,
No more revealing: yet a corollary
I freely give beside: nor deem my words
Less grateful to thee, if they somewhat pass
The stretch of promise. They, whose verse of yore
The golden age recorded and its bliss,
On the Parnassian mountain, of this place
Perhaps had dream'd. Here was man guiltless, here
Perpetual spring and every fruit, and this
The far-fam'd nectar." Turning to the bards,
When she had ceas'd, I noted in their looks
A smile at her conclusion; then my face
Again directed to the lovely dame.

CANTO XXIX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Singing, as if enamour'd, she resum'd
And clos'd the song, with "Blessed they whose sins
Are cover'd." Like the wood-nymphs then, that tripp'd
Singly across the sylvan shadows, one
Eager to view and one to 'scape the sun,
So mov'd she on, against the current, up
The verdant rivage. I, her mincing step
Observing, with as tardy step pursued.

Between us not an hundred paces trod,
The bank, on each side bending equally,
Gave me to face the orient. Nor our way
Far onward brought us, when to me at once
She turn'd, and cried: "My brother! look and hearken."
And lo! a sudden lustre ran across
Through the great forest on all parts, so bright
I doubted whether lightning were abroad;
But that expiring ever in the spleen,
That doth unfold it, and this during still
And waxing still in splendor, made me question
What it might be: and a sweet melody
Ran through the luminous air. Then did I chide
With warrantable zeal the hardihood
Of our first parent, for that there were earth
Stood in obedience to the heav'ns, she only,
Woman, the creature of an hour, endur'd not
Restraint of any veil: which had she borne
Devoutly, joys, ineffable as these,
Had from the first, and long time since, been mine.

While through that wilderness of primy sweets
That never fade, suspense I walk'd, and yet
Expectant of beatitude more high,
Before us, like a blazing fire, the air
Under the green boughs glow'd; and, for a song,

Distinct the sound of melody was heard.

O ye thrice holy virgins! for your sakes
If e'er I suffer'd hunger, cold and watching,
Occasion calls on me to crave your bounty.
Now through my breast let Helicon his stream
Pour copious; and Urania with her choir
Arise to aid me: while the verse unfolds
Things that do almost mock the grasp of thought.

Onward a space, what seem'd seven trees of gold,
The intervening distance to mine eye
Falsely presented; but when I was come
So near them, that no lineament was lost
Of those, with which a doubtful object, seen
Remotely, plays on the misdeeming sense,
Then did the faculty, that ministers
Discourse to reason, these for tapers of gold
Distinguish, and it th' singing trace the sound
"Hosanna." Above, their beauteous garniture
Flam'd with more ample lustre, than the moon
Through cloudless sky at midnight in her full.

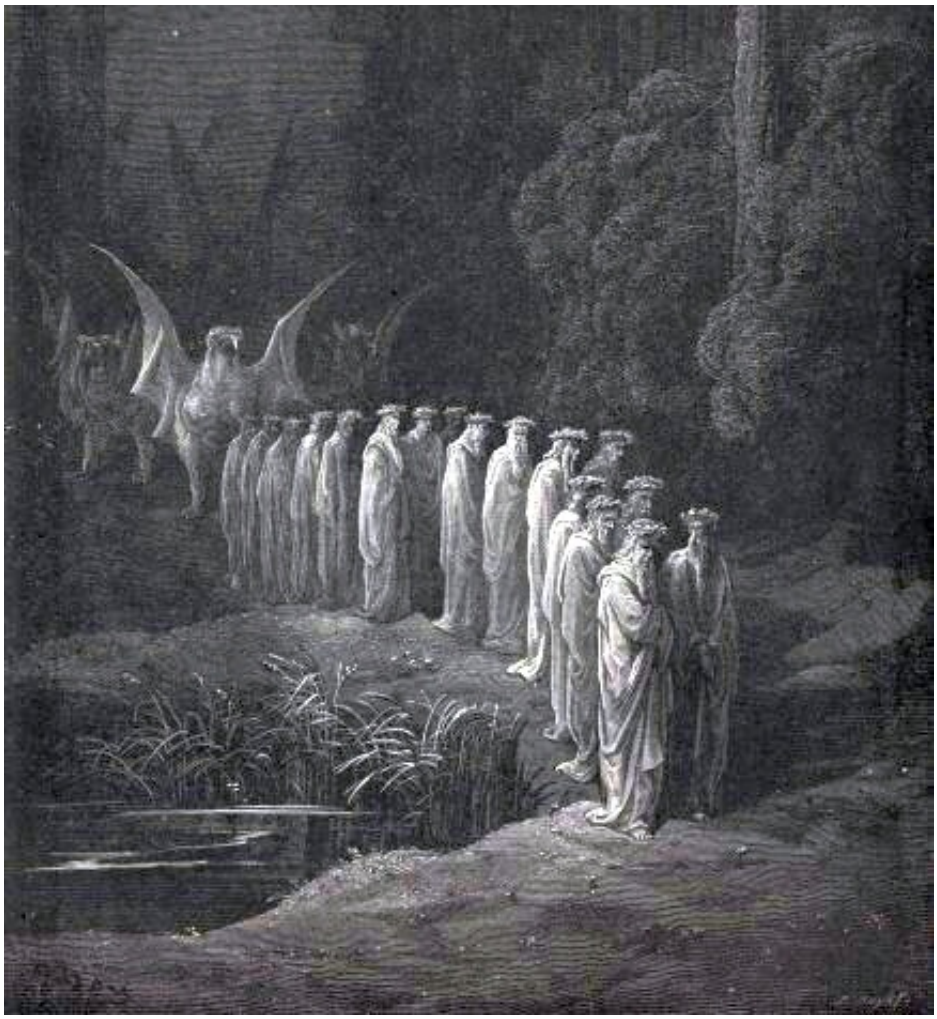
I turn'd me full of wonder to my guide;
And he did answer with a countenance
Charg'd with no less amazement: whence my view
Reverted to those lofty things, which came
So slowly moving towards us, that the bride
Would have outstript them on her bridal day.

The lady called aloud: "Why thus yet burns
Affection in thee for these living, lights,
And dost not look on that which follows them?"

I straightway mark'd a tribe behind them walk,
As if attendant on their leaders, cloth'd
With raiment of such whiteness, as on earth
Was never. On my left, the wat'ry gleam

Borrow’d, and gave me back, when there I look’d.
As in a mirror, my left side portray’d.

When I had chosen on the river’s edge
Such station, that the distance of the stream
Alone did separate me; there I stay’d
My steps for clearer prospect, and beheld
The flames go onward, leaving, as they went,
The air behind them painted as with trail
Of liveliest pencils! so distinct were mark’d
All those sev’n listed colours, whence the sun
Maketh his bow, and Cynthia her zone.
These streaming gonfalons did flow beyond
My vision; and ten paces, as I guess,
Parted the outermost. Beneath a sky
So beautiful, came foul and-twenty elders,
By two and two, with flower-de-luces crown’d.



All sang one song: “Blessed be thou among
The daughters of Adam! and thy loveliness
Blessed for ever!” After that the flowers,
And the fresh herblets, on the opposite brink,
Were free from that elected race; as light
In heav’n doth second light, came after them
Four animals, each crown’d with verdurous leaf.
With six wings each was plum’d, the plumage full
Of eyes, and th’ eyes of Argus would be such,
Were they endued with life. Reader, more rhymes
Will not waste in shadowing forth their form:
For other need no straitens, that in this
I may not give my bounty room. But read
Ezekiel; for he paints them, from the north
How he beheld them come by Chebar’s flood,

In whirlwind, cloud and fire; and even such
As thou shalt find them character'd by him,
Here were they; save as to the pennons; there,
From him departing, John accords with me.

The space, surrounded by the four, enclos'd
A car triumphal: on two wheels it came
Drawn at a Gryphon's neck; and he above
Stretch'd either wing uplifted, 'tween the midst
And the three listed hues, on each side three;
So that the wings did cleave or injure none;
And out of sight they rose. The members, far
As he was bird, were golden; white the rest
With vermeil intervein'd. So beautiful
A car in Rome ne'er grac'd Augustus pomp,
Or Africanus': e'en the sun's itself
Were poor to this, that chariot of the sun
Erroneous, which in blazing ruin fell
At Tellus' pray'r devout, by the just doom
Mysterious of all-seeing Jove. Three nymphs
at the right wheel, came circling in smooth dance;
The one so ruddy, that her form had scarce
Been known within a furnace of clear flame:
The next did look, as if the flesh and bones
Were emerald: snow new-fallen seem'd the third.

Now seem’d the white to lead, the ruddy now;
And from her song who led, the others took
Their treasure, swift or slow. At th’ other wheel,
A band quaternion, each in purple clad,
Advanc’d with festal step, as of them one
The rest conducted, one, upon whose front
Three eyes were seen. In rear of all this group,
Two old men I beheld, dissimilar
In raiment, but in port and gesture like,
Solid and mainly grave; of whom the one
Did show himself some favour’d counsellor
Of the great Coan, him, whom nature made
To serve the costliest creature of her tribe.
His fellow mark’d an opposite intent,
Bearing a sword, whose glitterance and keen edge,

E’en as I view’d it with the flood between,
Appall’d me. Next four others I beheld,
Of humble seeming: and, behind them all,
One single old man, sleeping, as he came,
With a shrewd visage. And these seven, each
Like the first troop were habited, but wore
No braid of lilies on their temples wreath’d.
Rather with roses and each vermeil flower,
A sight, but little distant, might have sworn,
That they were all on fire above their brow.

Whenas the car was o’er against me, straight.
Was heard a thund’ring, at whose voice it seem’d
The chosen multitude were stay’d; for there,
With the first ensigns, made they solemn halt.

CANTO XXX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Soon as the polar light, which never knows
Setting nor rising, nor the shadowy veil
Of other cloud than sin, fair ornament
Of the first heav'n, to duty each one there
Safely convoying, as that lower doth
The steersman to his port, stood firmly fix'd;
Forthwith the saintly tribe, who in the van
Between the Gryphon and its radiance came,
Did turn them to the car, as to their rest:
And one, as if commission'd from above,
In holy chant thrice shorted forth aloud:
"Come, spouse, from Libanus!" and all the rest
Took up the song — At the last audit so
The blest shall rise, from forth his cavern each
Uplifting lightly his new-vested flesh,
As, on the sacred litter, at the voice
Authoritative of that elder, sprang
A hundred ministers and messengers
Of life eternal. "Blessed thou! who com'st!"
And, "O," they cried, "from full hands scatter ye
Unwith'ring lilies;" and, so saying, cast
Flowers over head and round them on all sides.

I have beheld, ere now, at break of day,
The eastern clime all roseate, and the sky
Oppos'd, one deep and beautiful serene,
And the sun's face so shaded, and with mists
Attemper'd at lids rising, that the eye
Long while endur'd the sight: thus in a cloud
Of flowers, that from those hands angelic rose,
And down, within and outside of the car,
Fell showering, in white veil with olive wreath'd,
A virgin in my view appear'd, beneath
Green mantle, rob'd in hue of living flame:

And o’er my Spirit, that in former days
Within her presence had abode so long,
No shudd’ring terror crept. Mine eyes no more
Had knowledge of her; yet there mov’d from her
A hidden virtue, at whose touch awak’d,
The power of ancient love was strong within me.

No sooner on my vision streaming, smote
The heav’nly influence, which years past, and e’en
In childhood, thrill’d me, than towards Virgil I
Turn’d me to leftward, panting, like a babe,
That flees for refuge to his mother’s breast,
If aught have terrified or work’d him woe:
And would have cried: “There is no dram of blood,
That doth not quiver in me. The old flame

Throws out clear tokens of reviving fire:"
But Virgil had bereav'd us of himself,
Virgil, my best-lov'd father; Virgil, he
To whom I gave me up for safety: nor,
All, our prime mother lost, avail'd to save
My undew'd cheeks from blur of soiling tears.

"Dante, weep not, that Virgil leaves thee: nay,
Weep thou not yet: behooves thee feel the edge
Of other sword, and thou shalt weep for that."

As to the prow or stern, some admiral
Paces the deck, inspiriting his crew,
When 'mid the sail-yards all hands ply aloof;
Thus on the left side of the car I saw,
(Turning me at the sound of mine own name,
Which here I am compell'd to register)
The virgin station'd, who before appeared
Veil'd in that festive shower angelical.

Towards me, across the stream, she bent her eyes;
Though from her brow the veil descending, bound
With foliage of Minerva, suffer'd not
That I beheld her clearly; then with act
Full royal, still insulting o'er her thrall,
Added, as one, who speaking keepeth back
The bitterest saying, to conclude the speech:
"Observe me well. I am, in sooth, I am
Beatrice. What! and hast thou deign'd at last
Approach the mountain? knewest not, O man!
Thy happiness is whole?" Down fell mine eyes
On the clear fount, but there, myself espying,
Recoil'd, and sought the greensward: such a weight
Of shame was on my forehead. With a mien
Of that stern majesty, which doth surround
mother's presence to her awe-struck child,
She look'd; a flavour of such bitterness
Was mingled in her pity. There her words
Brake off, and suddenly the angels sang:

“In thee, O gracious Lord, my hope hath been:”
But went no farther than, “Thou Lord, hast set
My feet in ample room.” As snow, that lies
Amidst the living rafters on the back
Of Italy congeal’d when drifted high
And closely pil’d by rough Sclavonian blasts,
Breathe but the land whereon no shadow falls,
And straightway melting it distils away,
Like a fire-wasted taper: thus was I,
Without a sigh or tear, or ever these
Did sing, that with the chiming of heav’n’s sphere,
Still in their warbling chime: but when the strain
Of dulcet symphony, express’d for me
Their soft compassion, more than could the words
“Virgin, why so consum’st him?” then the ice,
Congeal’d about my bosom, turn’d itself
To spirit and water, and with anguish forth
Gush’d through the lips and eyelids from the heart.

Upon the chariot’s right edge still she stood,
Immovable, and thus address’d her words
To those bright semblances with pity touch’d:
“Ye in th’ eternal day your vigils keep,
So that nor night nor slumber, with close stealth,
Conveys from you a single step in all
The goings on of life: thence with more heed
I shape mine answer, for his ear intended,
Who there stands weeping, that the sorrow now
May equal the transgression. Not alone
Through operation of the mighty orbs,
That mark each seed to some predestin’d aim,
As with aspect or fortunate or ill
The constellations meet, but through benign
Largess of heav’nly graces, which rain down
From such a height, as mocks our vision, this man
Was in the freshness of his being, such,
So gifted virtually, that in him
All better habits wond’rously had thriv’d.
The more of kindly strength is in the soil,

So much doth evil seed and lack of culture
Mar it the more, and make it run to wildness.
These looks sometime upheld him; for I show'd
My youthful eyes, and led him by their light
In upright walking. Soon as I had reach'd
The threshold of my second age, and chang'd
My mortal for immortal, then he left me,
And gave himself to others. When from flesh
To spirit I had risen, and increase
Of beauty and of virtue circled me,
I was less dear to him, and valued less.
His steps were turn'd into deceitful ways,
Following false images of good, that make
No promise perfect. Nor avail'd me aught
To sue for inspirations, with the which,
I, both in dreams of night, and otherwise,
Did call him back; of them so little reck'd him,
Such depth he fell, that all device was short
Of his preserving, save that he should view
The children of perdition. To this end
I visited the purlieus of the dead:
And one, who hath conducted him thus high,
Receiv'd my supplications urg'd with weeping.
It were a breaking of God's high decree,
If Lethe should be past, and such food tasted
Without the cost of some repentant tear."

CANTO XXXI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"O Thou!" her words she thus without delay
Resuming, turn'd their point on me, to whom
They but with lateral edge seem'd harsh before,
"Say thou, who stand'st beyond the holy stream,
If this be true. A charge so grievous needs
Thine own avowal." On my faculty
Such strange amazement hung, the voice expir'd
Imperfect, ere its organs gave it birth.

A little space refraining, then she spake:
"What dost thou muse on? Answer me. The wave
On thy remembrances of evil yet
Hath done no injury." A mingled sense
Of fear and of confusion, from my lips
Did such a "Yea" produce, as needed help
Of vision to interpret. As when breaks
In act to be discharg'd, a cross-bow bent
Beyond its pitch, both nerve and bow o'erstretch'd,
The flagging weapon feebly hits the mark;
Thus, tears and sighs forth gushing, did I burst
Beneath the heavy load, and thus my voice
Was slacken'd on its way. She straight began:
"When my desire invited thee to love
The good, which sets a bound to our aspirings,
What bar of thwarting foss or linked chain
Did meet thee, that thou so should'st quit the hope
Of further progress, or what bait of ease
Or promise of allurement led thee on
Elsewhere, that thou elsewhere should'st rather wait?"

A bitter sigh I drew, then scarce found voice
To answer, hardly to these sounds my lips
Gave utterance, wailing: "Thy fair looks withdrawn,
Things present, with deceitful pleasures, turn'd
My steps aside." She answering spake: "Hadst thou

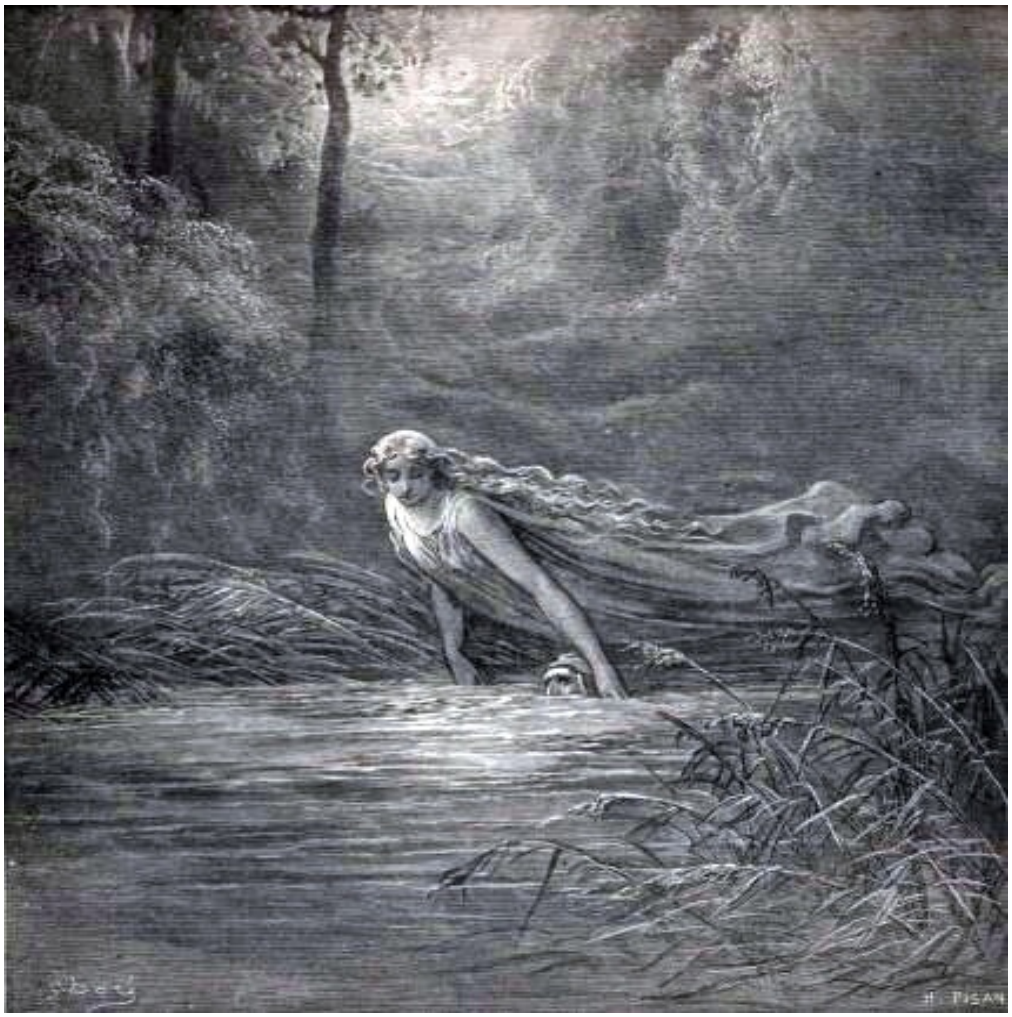
Been silent, or denied what thou avow'st,
Thou hadst not hid thy sin the more: such eye
Observes it. But whene'er the sinner's cheek
Breaks forth into the precious-streaming tears
Of self-accusing, in our court the wheel
Of justice doth run counter to the edge.
Howe'er that thou may'st profit by thy shame
For errors past, and that henceforth more strength
May arm thee, when thou hear'st the Siren-voice,
Lay thou aside the motive to this grief,
And lend attentive ear, while I unfold
How opposite a way my buried flesh
Should have impell'd thee. Never didst thou spy
In art or nature aught so passing sweet,
As were the limbs, that in their beauteous frame
Enclos'd me, and are scatter'd now in dust.
If sweetest thing thus fail'd thee with my death,
What, afterward, of mortal should thy wish
Have tempted? When thou first hadst felt the dart
Of perishable things, in my departing
For better realms, thy wing thou should'st have prun'd
To follow me, and never stoop'd again
To 'bide a second blow for a slight girl,
Or other gaud as transient and as vain.
The new and inexperienc'd bird awaits,
Twice it may be, or thrice, the fowler's aim;
But in the sight of one, whose plumes are full,
In vain the net is spread, the arrow wing'd."

I stood, as children silent and asham'd
Stand, list'ning, with their eyes upon the earth,
Acknowledging their fault and self-condemn'd.
And she resum'd: "If, but to hear thus pains thee,
Raise thou thy beard, and lo! what sight shall do!"

With less reluctance yields a sturdy holm,
Rent from its fibers by a blast, that blows
From off the pole, or from Iarbas' land,
Than I at her behest my visage rais'd:
And thus the face denoting by the beard

And thus the face denoting by the beard,
I mark'd the secret sting her words convey'd.

No sooner lifted I mine aspect up,
Than downward sunk that vision I beheld
Of goodly creatures vanish; and mine eyes
Yet unassur'd and wavering, bent their light
On Beatrice. Towards the animal,
Who joins two natures in one form, she turn'd,
And, even under shadow of her veil,
And parted by the verdant rill, that flow'd
Between, in loveliness appear'd as much
Her former self surpassing, as on earth
All others she surpass'd. Remorseful goads
Shot sudden through me. Each thing else, the more
Its love had late beguil'd me, now the more
I Was loathsome. On my heart so keenly smote
The bitter consciousness, that on the ground
O'erpower'd I fell: and what my state was then,
She knows who was the cause. When now my strength
Flow'd back, returning outward from the heart,
The lady, whom alone I first had seen,
I found above me. "Loose me not," she cried:
"Loose not thy hold;" and lo! had dragg'd me high
As to my neck into the stream, while she,
Still as she drew me after, swept along,
Swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave.



The blessed shore approaching then was heard
So sweetly, “Tu asperges me,” that I
May not remember, much less tell the sound.
The beauteous dame, her arms expanding, clasp’d
My temples, and immerg’d me, where ‘t was fit
The wave should drench me: and thence raising up,
Within the fourfold dance of lovely nymphs
Presented me so lav’d, and with their arm
They each did cover me. ”Here are we nymphs,
And in the heav’n are stars. Or ever earth
Was visited of Beatrice, we
Appointed for her handmaids, tended on her.
We to her eyes will lead thee; but the light
Of gladness that is in them, well to scan,
Those yonder three, of deeper ken than ours,

Thy sight shall quicken." Thus began their song;
And then they led me to the Gryphon's breast,
While, turn'd toward us, Beatrice stood.
"Spare not thy vision. We have stationed thee
Before the emeralds, whence love erewhile
Hath drawn his weapons on thee." As they spake,
A thousand fervent wishes riveted
Mine eyes upon her beaming eyes, that stood
Still fix'd toward the Gryphon motionless.
As the sun strikes a mirror, even thus
Within those orbs the twofold being, shone,
For ever varying, in one figure now
Reflected, now in other. Reader! muse
How wond'rous in my sight it seem'd to mark
A thing, albeit steadfast in itself,
Yet in its imag'd semblance mutable.

Full of amaze, and joyous, while my soul
Fed on the viand, whereof still desire
Grows with satiety, the other three
With gesture, that declar'd a loftier line,
Advanc'd: to their own carol on they came
Dancing in festive ring angelical.

"Turn, Beatrice!" was their song: "O turn
Thy saintly sight on this thy faithful one,
Who to behold thee many a wearisome pace
Hath measur'd. Gracious at our pray'r vouchsafe
Unveil to him thy cheeks: that he may mark
Thy second beauty, now conceal'd." O splendour!
O sacred light eternal! who is he
So pale with musing in Pierian shades,
Or with that fount so lavishly imbued,
Whose spirit should not fail him in th' essay
To represent thee such as thou didst seem,
When under cope of the still-chiming heaven
Thou gav'st to open air thy charms reveal'd.

CANTO XXXII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Mine eyes with such an eager coveting,
Were bent to rid them of their ten years' thirst,
No other sense was waking: and e'en they
Were fenc'd on either side from heed of aught;
So tangled in its custom'd toils that smile
Of saintly brightness drew me to itself,
When forcibly toward the left my sight
The sacred virgins turn'd; for from their lips
I heard the warning sounds: "Too fix'd a gaze!"

Awhile my vision labor'd; as when late
Upon the' o'erstrained eyes the sun hath smote:
But soon to lesser object, as the view
Was now recover'd (lesser in respect
To that excess of sensible, whence late
I had perforce been sunder'd) on their right
I mark'd that glorious army wheel, and turn,
Against the sun and sev'nfold lights, their front.
As when, their bucklers for protection rais'd,
A well-rang'd troop, with portly banners curl'd,
Wheel circling, ere the whole can change their ground:
E'en thus the goodly regiment of heav'n
Proceeding, all did pass us, ere the car
Had slop'd his beam. Attendant at the wheels
The damsels turn'd; and on the Gryphon mov'd
The sacred burden, with a pace so smooth,
No feather on him trembled. The fair dame
Who through the wave had drawn me, companied
By Statius and myself, pursued the wheel,
Whose orbit, rolling, mark'd a lesser arch.

Through the high wood, now void (the more her blame,
Who by the serpent was beguil'd) I past
With step in cadence to the harmony
Angelic. Onward had we mov'd, as far

Perchance as arrow at three several flights
Full wing'd had sped, when from her station down
Descended Beatrice. With one voice
All murmur'd "Adam," circling next a plant
Despoil'd of flowers and leaf on every bough.
Its tresses, spreading more as more they rose,
Were such, as 'midst their forest wilds for height
The Indians might have gaz'd at. "Blessed thou!
Gryphon, whose beak hath never pluck'd that tree
Pleasant to taste: for hence the appetite
Was warp'd to evil." Round the stately trunk
Thus shouted forth the rest, to whom return'd
The animal twice-gender'd: "Yea: for so
The generation of the just are sav'd."
And turning to the chariot-pole, to foot
He drew it of the widow'd branch, and bound
There left unto the stock whereon it grew.

As when large floods of radiance from above
Stream, with that radiance mingled, which ascends
Next after setting of the scaly sign,
Our plants then burgeon, and each wears anew
His wonted colours, ere the sun have yok'd
Beneath another star his flamy steeds;
Thus putting forth a hue, more faint than rose,
And deeper than the violet, was renew'd
The plant, erewhile in all its branches bare.

Unearthly was the hymn, which then arose.
I understood it not, nor to the end
Endur'd the harmony. Had I the skill
To pencil forth, how clos'd th' unpitying eyes
Slumb'ring, when Syrinx warbled, (eyes that paid
So dearly for their watching,) then like painter,
That with a model paints, I might design
The manner of my falling into sleep.
But feign who will the slumber cunningly;
I pass it by to when I wak'd, and tell
How suddenly a flash of splendour rent

The curtain of my sleep, and one cries out:
“Arise, what dost thou?” As the chosen three,
On Tabor’s mount, admitted to behold
The blossoming of that fair tree, whose fruit
Is coveted of angels, and doth make
Perpetual feast in heaven, to themselves
Returning at the word, whence deeper sleeps
Were broken, that they their tribe diminish’d saw,
Both Moses and Elias gone, and chang’d
The stole their master wore: thus to myself
Returning, over me beheld I stand
The piteous one, who cross the stream had brought
My steps. ”And where,” all doubting, I exclaim’d,
“Is Beatrice?”— “See her,” she replied,
“Beneath the fresh leaf seated on its root.
Behold th’ associate choir that circles her.
The others, with a melody more sweet
And more profound, journeying to higher realms,
Upon the Gryphon tend.” If there her words
Were clos’d, I know not; but mine eyes had now
Ta’en view of her, by whom all other thoughts
Were barr’d admittance. On the very ground
Alone she sat, as she had there been left
A guard upon the wain, which I beheld
Bound to the twyform beast. The seven nymphs
Did make themselves a cloister round about her,
And in their hands upheld those lights secure
From blast septentrion and the gusty south.

“A little while thou shalt be forester here:
And citizen shalt be forever with me,
Of that true Rome, wherein Christ dwells a Roman
To profit the misguided world, keep now
Thine eyes upon the car; and what thou seest,
Take heed thou write, returning to that place.”

Thus Beatrice: at whose feet inclin’d
Devout, at her behest, my thought and eyes,
I, as she bade, directed. Never fire,

With so swift motion, forth a stormy cloud
Leap'd downward from the welkin's farthest bound,
As I beheld the bird of Jove descending
Pounce on the tree, and, as he rush'd, the rind,
Disparting crush beneath him, buds much more
And leaflets. On the car with all his might
He struck, whence, staggering like a ship, it reel'd,
At random driv'n, to starboard now, o'ercome,
And now to larboard, by the vaulting waves.

Next springing up into the chariot's womb
A fox I saw, with hunger seeming pin'd
Of all good food. But, for his ugly sins
The saintly maid rebuking him, away
Scamp'ring he turn'd, fast as his hide-bound corpse
Would bear him. Next, from whence before he came,
I saw the eagle dart into the hull
O' th' car, and leave it with his feathers lin'd;
And then a voice, like that which issues forth
From heart with sorrow riv'd, did issue forth
From heav'n, and, "O poor bark of mine!" it cried,
"How badly art thou freighted!" Then, it seem'd,
That the earth open'd between either wheel,
And I beheld a dragon issue thence,
That through the chariot fix'd his forked train;
And like a wasp that draggeth back the sting,
So drawing forth his baleful train, he dragg'd
Part of the bottom forth, and went his way
Exulting. What remain'd, as lively turf
With green herb, so did clothe itself with plumes,
Which haply had with purpose chaste and kind
Been offer'd; and therewith were cloth'd the wheels,
Both one and other, and the beam, so quickly
A sigh were not breath'd sooner. Thus transform'd,
The holy structure, through its several parts,
Did put forth heads, three on the beam, and one
On every side; the first like oxen horn'd,
But with a single horn upon their front
The four. Like monster sight hath never seen.

O’er it methought there sat, secure as rock
On mountain’s lofty top, a shameless whore,
Whose ken rov’d loosely round her. At her side,
As ‘t were that none might bear her off, I saw
A giant stand; and ever, and anon
They mingled kisses. But, her lustful eyes
Chancing on me to wander, that fell minion
Scourg’d her from head to foot all o’er; then full
Of jealousy, and fierce with rage, unloos’d
The monster, and dragg’d on, so far across
The forest, that from me its shades alone
Shielded the harlot and the new-form’d brute.

CANTO XXXIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"The heathen, Lord! are come!" responsive thus,
The trinal now, and now the virgin band
Quaternion, their sweet psalmody began,
Weeping; and Beatrice listen'd, sad
And sighing, to the song', in such a mood,
That Mary, as she stood beside the cross,
Was scarce more chang'd. But when they gave her place
To speak, then, risen upright on her feet,
She, with a colour glowing bright as fire,
Did answer: "Yet a little while, and ye
Shall see me not; and, my beloved sisters,
Again a little while, and ye shall see me."

Before her then she marshall'd all the seven,
And, beck'ning only motion'd me, the dame,
And that remaining sage, to follow her.

So on she pass'd; and had not set, I ween,
Her tenth step to the ground, when with mine eyes
Her eyes encounter'd; and, with visage mild,
"So mend thy pace," she cried, "that if my words
Address thee, thou mayst still be aptly plac'd
To hear them." Soon as duly to her side
I now had hasten'd: "Brother!" she began,
"Why mak'st thou no attempt at questioning,
As thus we walk together?" Like to those
Who, speaking with too reverent an awe
Before their betters, draw not forth the voice
Alive unto their lips, befell me shell
That I in sounds imperfect thus began:
"Lady! what I have need of, that thou know'st,
And what will suit my need." She answering thus:
"Of fearfulness and shame, I will, that thou
Henceforth do rid thee: that thou speak no more,
As one who dreams. Thus far be taught of me:

The vessel, which thou saw’st the serpent break,
Was and is not: let him, who hath the blame,
Hope not to scare God’s vengeance with a sop.
Without an heir for ever shall not be
That eagle, he, who left the chariot plum’d,
Which monster made it first and next a prey.
Plainly I view, and therefore speak, the stars
E’en now approaching, whose conjunction, free
From all impediment and bar, brings on
A season, in the which, one sent from God,
(Five hundred, five, and ten, do mark him out)
That foul one, and th’ accomplice of her guilt,
The giant, both shall slay. And if perchance
My saying, dark as Themis or as Sphinx,
Fail to persuade thee, (since like them it foils
The intellect with blindness) yet ere long
Events shall be the Naiads, that will solve
This knotty riddle, and no damage light
On flock or field. Take heed; and as these words
By me are utter’d, teach them even so
To those who live that life, which is a race
To death: and when thou writ’st them, keep in mind
Not to conceal how thou hast seen the plant,
That twice hath now been spoil’d. This whoso robs,
This whoso plucks, with blasphemy of deed
Sins against God, who for his use alone
Creating hallow’d it. For taste of this,
In pain and in desire, five thousand years
And upward, the first soul did yearn for him,
Who punish’d in himself the fatal gust.

“Thy reason slumbers, if it deem this height
And summit thus inverted of the plant,
Without due cause: and were not vainer thoughts,
As Elsa’s numbing waters, to thy soul,
And their fond pleasures had not dyed it dark
As Pyramus the mulberry, thou hadst seen,
In such momentous circumstance alone,
God’s equal justice morally implied

In the forbidden tree. But since I mark thee
In understanding harden’d into stone,
And, to that hardness, spotted too and stain’d,
So that thine eye is dazzled at my word,
I will, that, if not written, yet at least
Painted thou take it in thee, for the cause,
That one brings home his staff inwreath’d with palm.

I thus: “As wax by seal, that changeth not
Its impress, now is stamp’d my brain by thee.
But wherefore soars thy wish’d-for speech so high
Beyond my sight, that loses it the more,
The more it strains to reach it?”— “To the end
That thou mayst know,” she answer’d straight, “the school,
That thou hast follow’d; and how far behind,
When following my discourse, its learning halts:
And mayst behold your art, from the divine
As distant, as the disagreement is
‘Twixt earth and heaven’s most high and rapturous orb.”

“I not remember,” I replied, “that e’er
I was estrang’d from thee, nor for such fault
Doth conscience chide me.” Smiling she return’d:
“If thou canst, not remember, call to mind
How lately thou hast drunk of Lethe’s wave;
And, sure as smoke doth indicate a flame,
In that forgetfulness itself conclude
Blame from thy alienated will incurr’d.
From henceforth verily my words shall be
As naked as will suit them to appear
In thy unpractis’d view.” More sparkling now,
And with retarded course the sun possess’d
The circle of mid-day, that varies still
As th’ aspect varies of each several clime,
When, as one, sent in vaward of a troop
For escort, pauses, if perchance he spy
Vestige of somewhat strange and rare: so paus’d
The sev’nfold band, arriving at the verge
Of a dun umbrage hoar, such as is seen,

Beneath green leaves and gloomy branches, oft
To overbrow a bleak and alpine cliff.
And, where they stood, before them, as it seem'd,
Tigris and Euphrates both beheld,
Forth from one fountain issue; and, like friends,
Linger at parting. "O enlight'ning beam!
O glory of our kind! beseech thee say
What water this, which from one source deriv'd
Itself removes to distance from itself?"

To such entreaty answer thus was made:
"Entreat Matilda, that she teach thee this."

And here, as one, who clears himself of blame
Imputed, the fair dame return'd: "Of me
He this and more hath learnt; and I am safe
That Lethe's water hath not hid it from him."

And Beatrice: "Some more pressing care
That oft the memory 'reeves, perchance hath made
His mind's eye dark. But lo! where Eunoe cows!
Lead thither; and, as thou art wont, revive
His fainting virtue." As a courteous spirit,
That proffers no excuses, but as soon
As he hath token of another's will,
Makes it his own; when she had ta'en me, thus
The lovely maiden mov'd her on, and call'd
To Statius with an air most lady-like:
"Come thou with him." Were further space allow'd,
Then, Reader, might I sing, though but in part,
That beverage, with whose sweetness I had ne'er
Been sated. But, since all the leaves are full,
Appointed for this second strain, mine art
With warning bridle checks me. I return'd
From the most holy wave, regenerate,
If 'en as new plants renew'd with foliage new,
Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars.

PARADISE

CANTO I

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

His glory, by whose might all things are mov'd,
Pierces the universe, and in one part
Sheds more resplendence, elsewhere less. In heav'n,
That largeliest of his light partakes, was I,
Witness of things, which to relate again
Surpasseth power of him who comes from thence;
For that, so near approaching its desire
Our intellect is to such depth absorb'd,
That memory cannot follow. Nathless all,
That in my thoughts I of that sacred realm
Could store, shall now be matter of my song.

Benign Apollo! this last labour aid,
And make me such a vessel of thy worth,
As thy own laurel claims of me belov'd.
Thus far hath one of steep Parnassus' brows
Suffic'd me; henceforth there is need of both
For my remaining enterprise Do thou
Enter into my bosom, and there breathe
So, as when Marsyas by thy hand was dragg'd
Forth from his limbs unsheath'd. O power divine!
If thou to me of shine impart so much,
That of that happy realm the shadow'd form
Trac'd in my thoughts I may set forth to view,
Thou shalt behold me of thy favour'd tree
Come to the foot, and crown myself with leaves;
For to that honour thou, and my high theme
Will fit me. If but seldom, mighty Sire!
To grace his triumph gathers thence a wreath
Caesar or bard (more shame for human wills
Deprav'd) joy to the Delphic god must spring
From the Pierian foliage, when one breast
Is with such thirst inspir'd. From a small spark
Great flame hath risen: after me perchance

Others with better voice may pray, and gain
From the Cirrhaean city answer kind.

Through diver passages, the world's bright lamp
Rises to mortals, but through that which joins
Four circles with the threefold cross, in best
Course, and in happiest constellation set
He comes, and to the worldly wax best gives
Its temper and impression. Morning there,
Here eve was by almost such passage made;
And whiteness had o'erspread that hemisphere,
Blackness the other part; when to the left
I saw Beatrice turn'd, and on the sun
Gazing, as never eagle fix'd his ken.
As from the first a second beam is wont
To issue, and reflected upwards rise,
E'en as a pilgrim bent on his return,
So of her act, that through the eyesight pass'd
Into my fancy, mine was form'd; and straight,
Beyond our mortal wont, I fix'd mine eyes
Upon the sun. Much is allowed us there,
That here exceeds our pow'r; thanks to the place
Made for the dwelling of the human kind

I suffer'd it not long, and yet so long
That I beheld it bick'ring sparks around,
As iron that comes boiling from the fire.
And suddenly upon the day appear'd
A day new-ris'n, as he, who hath the power,
Had with another sun bedeck'd the sky.

Her eyes fast fix'd on the eternal wheels,
Beatrice stood unmov'd; and I with ken
Fix'd upon her, from upward gaze remov'd
At her aspect, such inwardly became
As Glaucus, when he tasted of the herb,
That made him peer among the ocean gods;
Words may not tell of that transhuman change:

And therefore let the example serve, though weak,
For those whom grace hath better proof in store

If I were only what thou didst create,
Then newly, Love! by whom the heav'n is rul'd,
Thou know'st, who by thy light didst bear me up.
Whenas the wheel which thou dost ever guide,
Desired Spirit! with its harmony
Temper'd of thee and measur'd, charm'd mine ear,
Then seem'd to me so much of heav'n to blaze
With the sun's flame, that rain or flood ne'er made
A lake so broad. The newness of the sound,
And that great light, inflam'd me with desire,
Keener than e'er was felt, to know their cause.

Whence she who saw me, clearly as myself,
To calm my troubled mind, before I ask'd,
Open'd her lips, and gracious thus began:
"With false imagination thou thyself
Mak'st dull, so that thou seest not the thing,
Which thou hadst seen, had that been shaken off.
Thou art not on the earth as thou believ'st;
For light'ning scap'd from its own proper place
Ne'er ran, as thou hast hither now return'd."

Although divested of my first-rais'd doubt,
By those brief words, accompanied with smiles,
Yet in new doubt was I entangled more,
And said: "Already satisfied, I rest
From admiration deep, but now admire
How I above those lighter bodies rise."

Whence, after utt'rance of a piteous sigh,
She tow'rds me bent her eyes, with such a look,
As on her frenzied child a mother casts;
Then thus began: "Among themselves all things
Have order; and from hence the form, which makes
The universe resemble God. In this
The higher creatures see the printed steps

Of that eternal worth, which is the end
Whither the line is drawn. All natures lean,
In this their order, diversely, some more,
Some less approaching to their primal source.
Thus they to different havens are mov'd on
Through the vast sea of being, and each one
With instinct giv'n, that bears it in its course;
This to the lunar sphere directs the fire,
This prompts the hearts of mortal animals,
This the brute earth together knits, and binds.
Nor only creatures, void of intellect,
Are aim'd at by this bow; but even those,
That have intelligence and love, are pierc'd.
That Providence, who so well orders all,
With her own light makes ever calm the heaven,
In which the substance, that hath greatest speed,
Is turn'd: and thither now, as to our seat
Predestin'd, we are carried by the force
Of that strong cord, that never looses dart,
But at fair aim and glad. Yet is it true,
That as ofttimes but ill accords the form
To the design of art, through sluggishness
Of unreplying matter, so this course
Is sometimes quitted by the creature, who
Hath power, directed thus, to bend elsewhere;
As from a cloud the fire is seen to fall,
From its original impulse warp'd, to earth,
By vicious fondness. Thou no more admire
Thy soaring, (if I rightly deem,) than lapse
Of torrent downwards from a mountain's height.
There would in thee for wonder be more cause,
If, free of hind'rance, thou hadst fix'd thyself
Below, like fire unmoving on the earth."

So said, she turn'd toward the heav'n her face.

CANTO II

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

All ye, who in small bark have following sail'd,
Eager to listen, on the advent'rous track
Of my proud keel, that singing cuts its way,
Backward return with speed, and your own shores
Revisit, nor put out to open sea,
Where losing me, perchance ye may remain
Bewilder'd in deep maze. The way I pass
Ne'er yet was run: Minerva breathes the gale,
Apollo guides me, and another Nine
To my rapt sight the arctic beams reveal.
Ye other few, who have outstretch'd the neck.
Timely for food of angels, on which here
They live, yet never know satiety,
Through the deep brine ye fearless may put out
Your vessel, marking, well the furrow broad
Before you in the wave, that on both sides
Equal returns. Those, glorious, who pass'd o'er
To Colchos, wonder'd not as ye will do,
When they saw Jason following the plough.

The increate perpetual thirst, that draws
Toward the realm of God's own form, bore us
Swift almost as the heaven ye behold.

Beatrice upward gaz'd, and I on her,
And in such space as on the notch a dart
Is plac'd, then loosen'd flies, I saw myself
Arriv'd, where wond'rous thing engag'd my sight.
Whence she, to whom no work of mine was hid,
Turning to me, with aspect glad as fair,
Bespake me: "Gratefully direct thy mind
To God, through whom to this first star we come."

Me seem'd as if a cloud had cover'd us,
Translucent, solid, firm, and polish'd bright,

Like adamant, which the sun's beam had smit
Within itself the ever-during pearl
Receiv'd us, as the wave a ray of light
Receives, and rests unbroken. If I then
Was of corporeal frame, and it transcend
Our weaker thought, how one dimension thus
Another could endure, which needs must be
If body enter body, how much more
Must the desire inflame us to behold
That essence, which discovers by what means
God and our nature join'd! There will be seen
That which we hold through faith, not shown by proof,
But in itself intelligibly plain,
E'en as the truth that man at first believes.

I answered: "Lady! I with thoughts devout,
Such as I best can frame, give thanks to Him,
Who hath remov'd me from the mortal world.
But tell, I pray thee, whence the gloomy spots
Upon this body, which below on earth
Give rise to talk of Cain in fabling quaint?"

She somewhat smil'd, then spake: "If mortals err
In their opinion, when the key of sense
Unlocks not, surely wonder's weapon keen
Ought not to pierce thee; since thou find'st, the wings
Of reason to pursue the senses' flight
Are short. But what thy own thought is, declare."

Then I: "What various here above appears,
Is caus'd, I deem, by bodies dense or rare."

She then resum'd: "Thou certainly wilt see
In falsehood thy belief o'erwhelm'd, if well
Thou listen to the arguments, which I
Shall bring to face it. The eighth sphere displays
Numberless lights, the which in kind and size
May be remark'd of different aspects;
If rare or dense of that were cause alone,

One single virtue then would be in all,
Alike distributed, or more, or less.
Different virtues needs must be the fruits
Of formal principles, and these, save one,
Will by thy reasoning be destroy'd. Beside,
If rarity were of that dusk the cause,
Which thou inquirest, either in some part
That planet must throughout be void, nor fed
With its own matter; or, as bodies share
Their fat and leanness, in like manner this
Must in its volume change the leaves. The first,
If it were true, had through the sun's eclipse
Been manifested, by transparency
Of light, as through aught rare beside effus'd.
But this is not. Therefore remains to see
The other cause: and if the other fall,
Erroneous so must prove what seem'd to thee.
If not from side to side this rarity
Pass through, there needs must be a limit, whence
Its contrary no further lets it pass.
And hence the beam, that from without proceeds,
Must be pour'd back, as colour comes, through glass
Reflected, which behind it lead conceals.
Now wilt thou say, that there of murkier hue
Than in the other part the ray is shown,
By being thence refracted farther back.
From this perplexity will free thee soon
Experience, if thereof thou trial make,
The fountain whence your arts derive their streame.
Three mirrors shalt thou take, and two remove
From thee alike, and more remote the third.
Betwixt the former pair, shall meet thine eyes;
Then turn'd toward them, cause behind thy back
A light to stand, that on the three shall shine,
And thus reflected come to thee from all.
Though that beheld most distant do not stretch
A space so ample, yet in brightness thou
Will own it equaling the rest. But now,
As under snow the ground, if the warm ray

Smites it, remains dismantled of the hue
And cold, that cover'd it before, so thee,
Dismantled in thy mind, I will inform
With light so lively, that the tremulous beam
Shall quiver where it falls. Within the heaven,
Where peace divine inhabits, circles round
A body, in whose virtue dies the being
Of all that it contains. The following heaven,
That hath so many lights, this being divides,
Through different essences, from it distinct,
And yet contain'd within it. The other orbs
Their separate distinctions variously
Dispose, for their own seed and produce apt.
Thus do these organs of the world proceed,
As thou beholdest now, from step to step,
Their influences from above deriving,
And thence transmitting downwards. Mark me well,
How through this passage to the truth I ford,
The truth thou lov'st, that thou henceforth alone,
May'st know to keep the shallows, safe, untold.

"The virtue and motion of the sacred orbs,
As mallet by the workman's hand, must needs
By blessed movers be inspir'd. This heaven,
Made beauteous by so many luminaries,
From the deep spirit, that moves its circling sphere,
Its image takes an impress as a seal:
And as the soul, that dwells within your dust,
Through members different, yet together form'd,
In different pow'rs resolves itself; e'en so
The intellectual efficacy unfolds
Its goodness multiplied throughout the stars;
On its own unity revolving still.
Different virtue compact different
Makes with the precious body it enlivens,
With which it knits, as life in you is knit.
From its original nature full of joy,
The virtue mingled through the body shines,
As joy through pupil of the living eye.

From hence proceeds, that which from light to light
Seems different, and not from dense or rare.
This is the formal cause, that generates
Proportion’d to its power, the dusk or clear.”

CANTO III

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

That sun, which erst with love my bosom warm'd
Had of fair truth unveil'd the sweet aspect,
By proof of right, and of the false reproof;
And I, to own myself convinc'd and free
Of doubt, as much as needed, rais'd my head
Erect for speech. But soon a sight appear'd,
Which, so intent to mark it, held me fix'd,
That of confession I no longer thought.

As through translucent and smooth glass, or wave
Clear and unmov'd, and flowing not so deep

As that its bed is dark, the shape returns
So faint of our impictur'd lineaments,
That on white forehead set a pearl as strong
Comes to the eye: such saw I many a face,
All stretch'd to speak, from whence I straight conceiv'd
Delusion opposite to that, which rais'd
Between the man and fountain, amorous flame.

Sudden, as I perceiv'd them, deeming these
Reflected semblances to see of whom
They were, I turn'd mine eyes, and nothing saw;
Then turn'd them back, directed on the light
Of my sweet guide, who smiling shot forth beams
From her celestial eyes. "Wonder not thou,"
She cry'd, "at this my smiling, when I see
Thy childish judgment; since not yet on truth
It rests the foot, but, as it still is wont,
Makes thee fall back in unsound vacancy.
True substances are these, which thou behold'st,
Hither through failure of their vow exil'd.
But speak thou with them; listen, and believe,
That the true light, which fills them with desire,
Permits not from its beams their feet to stray."

Straight to the shadow which for converse seem'd
Most earnest, I addressed me, and began,
As one by over-eagerness perplex'd:
"O spirit, born for joy! who in the rays
Of life eternal, of that sweetness know'st
The flavour, which, not tasted, passes far
All apprehension, me it well would please,
If thou wouldst tell me of thy name, and this
Your station here." Whence she, with kindness prompt,
And eyes glist'ning with smiles: "Our charity,
To any wish by justice introduc'd,
Bars not the door, no more than she above,
Who would have all her court be like herself.
I was a virgin sister in the earth;
And if thy mind observe me well, this form,

With such addition grac'd of loveliness,
Will not conceal me long, but thou wilt know
Piccarda, in the tardiest sphere thus plac'd,
Here 'mid these other blessed also blest.
Our hearts, whose high affections burn alone
With pleasure, from the Holy Spirit conceiv'd,
Admitted to his order dwell in joy.
And this condition, which appears so low,
Is for this cause assign'd us, that our vows
Were in some part neglected and made void."

Whence I to her replied: "Something divine
Beams in your countenance, wond'rous fair,
From former knowledge quite transmuting you.
Therefore to recollect was I so slow.
But what thou sayst hath to my memory
Given now such aid, that to retrace your forms
Is easier. Yet inform me, ye, who here
Are happy, long ye for a higher place
More to behold, and more in love to dwell?"

She with those other spirits gently smil'd,
Then answer'd with such gladness, that she seem'd
With love's first flame to glow: "Brother! our will
Is in composure settled by the power
Of charity, who makes us will alone
What we possess, and nought beyond desire;
If we should wish to be exalted more,
Then must our wishes jar with the high will
Of him, who sets us here, which in these orbs
Thou wilt confess not possible, if here
To be in charity must needs befall,
And if her nature well thou contemplate.
Rather it is inherent in this state
Of blessedness, to keep ourselves within
The divine will, by which our wills with his
Are one. So that as we from step to step
Are plac'd throughout this kingdom, pleases all,
E'en as our King, who in us plants his will;

And in his will is our tranquillity;
It is the mighty ocean, whither tends
Whatever it creates and nature makes."

Then saw I clearly how each spot in heav'n
Is Paradise, though with like gracious dew
The supreme virtue show'r not over all.

But as it chances, if one sort of food
Hath satiated, and of another still
The appetite remains, that this is ask'd,
And thanks for that return'd; e'en so did I
In word and motion, bent from her to learn
What web it was, through which she had not drawn
The shuttle to its point. She thus began:
"Exalted worth and perfectness of life
The Lady higher up enshrine in heaven,
By whose pure laws upon your nether earth
The robe and veil they wear, to that intent,
That e'en till death they may keep watch or sleep
With their great bridegroom, who accepts each vow,
Which to his gracious pleasure love conforms.
from the world, to follow her, when young
Escap'd; and, in her vesture mantling me,
Made promise of the way her sect enjoins.
Thereafter men, for ill than good more apt,
Forth snatch'd me from the pleasant cloister's pale.
God knows how after that my life was fram'd.
This other splendid shape, which thou beholdst
At my right side, burning with all the light
Of this our orb, what of myself I tell
May to herself apply. From her, like me
A sister, with like violence were torn
The saintly folds, that shaded her fair brows.
E'en when she to the world again was brought
In spite of her own will and better wont,
Yet not for that the bosom's inward veil
Did she renounce. This is the luminary
Of mighty Constance, who from that loud blast,

Which blew the second over Suabia's realm,
That power produc'd, which was the third and last."

She ceas'd from further talk, and then began
"Ave Maria" singing, and with that song
Vanish'd, as heavy substance through deep wave.

Mine eye, that far as it was capable,
Pursued her, when in dimness she was lost,
Turn'd to the mark where greater want impell'd,
And bent on Beatrice all its gaze.
But she as light'ning beam'd upon my looks:
So that the sight sustain'd it not at first.
Whence I to question her became less prompt.

CANTO IV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Between two kinds of food, both equally
Remote and tempting, first a man might die
Of hunger, ere he one could freely choose.
E'en so would stand a lamb between the maw
Of two fierce wolves, in dread of both alike:
E'en so between two deer a dog would stand,
Wherefore, if I was silent, fault nor praise
I to myself impute, by equal doubts
Held in suspense, since of necessity
It happen'd. Silent was I, yet desire
Was painted in my looks; and thus I spake
My wish more earnestly than language could.

As Daniel, when the haughty king he freed
From ire, that spurr'd him on to deeds unjust
And violent; so look'd Beatrice then.

"Well I discern," she thus her words address'd,
"How contrary desires each way constrain thee,
So that thy anxious thought is in itself
Bound up and stifled, nor breathes freely forth.
Thou arguest; if the good intent remain;
What reason that another's violence
Should stint the measure of my fair desert?

"Cause too thou findst for doubt, in that it seems,
That spirits to the stars, as Plato deem'd,
Return. These are the questions which thy will
Urge equally; and therefore I the first
Of that will treat which hath the more of gall.
Of seraphim he who is most ensky'd,
Moses and Samuel, and either John,
Choose which thou wilt, nor even Mary's self,
Have not in any other heav'n their seats,
Than have those spirits which so late thou saw'st;

Nor more or fewer years exist; but all
Make the first circle beauteous, diversely
Partaking of sweet life, as more or less
Afflation of eternal bliss pervades them.
Here were they shown thee, not that fate assigns
This for their sphere, but for a sign to thee
Of that celestial furthest from the height.
Thus needs, that ye may apprehend, we speak:
Since from things sensible alone ye learn
That, which digested rightly after turns
To intellectual. For no other cause
The scripture, condescending graciously
To your perception, hands and feet to God
Attributes, nor so means: and holy church
Doth represent with human countenance
Gabriel, and Michael, and him who made
Tobias whole. Unlike what here thou seest,
The judgment of Timaeus, who affirms
Each soul restor'd to its particular star,
Believing it to have been taken thence,
When nature gave it to inform her mold:
Since to appearance his intention is
E'en what his words declare: or else to shun
Derision, haply thus he hath disguis'd
His true opinion. If his meaning be,
That to the influencing of these orbs revert
The honour and the blame in human acts,
Perchance he doth not wholly miss the truth.
This principle, not understood aright,
Erewhile perverted well nigh all the world;
So that it fell to fabled names of Jove,
And Mercury, and Mars. That other doubt,
Which moves thee, is less harmful; for it brings
No peril of removing thee from me.

"That, to the eye of man, our justice seems
Unjust, is argument for faith, and not
For heretic declension. To the end

This truth may stand more clearly in your view,
I will content thee even to thy wish

”If violence be, when that which suffers, nought
Consents to that which forceth, not for this
These spirits stood exculpate. For the will,
That will not, still survives unquench’d, and doth
As nature doth in fire, tho’ violence
Wrest it a thousand times; for, if it yield
Or more or less, so far it follows force.
And thus did these, whom they had power to seek
The hallow’d place again. In them, had will
Been perfect, such as once upon the bars
Held Laurence firm, or wrought in Scaevola
To his own hand remorseless, to the path,
Whence they were drawn, their steps had hasten’d back,
When liberty return’d: but in too few
Resolve so steadfast dwells. And by these words
If duly weigh’d, that argument is void,
Which oft might have perplex’d thee still. But now
Another question thwarts thee, which to solve
Might try thy patience without better aid.
I have, no doubt, instill’d into thy mind,
That blessed spirit may not lie; since near
The source of primal truth it dwells for aye:
And thou might’st after of Piccarda learn
That Constance held affection to the veil;
So that she seems to contradict me here.
Not seldom, brother, it hath chanc’d for men
To do what they had gladly left undone,
Yet to shun peril they have done amiss:
E’en as Alcmaeon, at his father’s suit
Slew his own mother, so made pitiless
Not to lose pity. On this point bethink thee,
That force and will are blended in such wise
As not to make the’ offence excusable.
Absolute will agrees not to the wrong,
That inasmuch as there is fear of woe
From non-compliance, it agrees. Of will

Thus absolute Piccarda spake, and I
Of th' other; so that both have truly said."

Such was the flow of that pure rill, that well'd
From forth the fountain of all truth; and such
The rest, that to my wond'ring thoughts I found.

"O thou of primal love the prime delight!
Goddess!" I straight reply'd, "whose lively words
Still shed new heat and vigour through my soul!
Affection fails me to requite thy grace
With equal sum of gratitude: be his
To recompense, who sees and can reward thee.
Well I discern, that by that truth alone
Enlighten'd, beyond which no truth may roam,
Our mind can satisfy her thirst to know:
Therein she resteth, e'en as in his lair
The wild beast, soon as she hath reach'd that bound,
And she hath power to reach it; else desire
Were given to no end. And thence doth doubt
Spring, like a shoot, around the stock of truth;
And it is nature which from height to height
On to the summit prompts us. This invites,
This doth assure me, lady, rev'rently
To ask thee of other truth, that yet
Is dark to me. I fain would know, if man
By other works well done may so supply
The failure of his vows, that in your scale
They lack not weight." I spake; and on me straight
Beatrice look'd with eyes that shot forth sparks
Of love celestial in such copious stream,
That, virtue sinking in me overpower'd,
I turn'd, and downward bent confus'd my sight.

CANTO V

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"If beyond earthly wont, the flame of love
Illume me, so that I o'ercome thy power
Of vision, marvel not: but learn the cause
In that perfection of the sight, which soon
As apprehending, hasteneth on to reach
The good it apprehends. I well discern,
How in thine intellect already shines
The light eternal, which to view alone
Ne'er fails to kindle love; and if aught else
Your love seduces, 't is but that it shows
Some ill-mark'd vestige of that primal beam.

"This would'st thou know, if failure of the vow
By other service may be so supplied,
As from self-question to assure the soul."

Thus she her words, not heedless of my wish,
Began; and thus, as one who breaks not off
Discourse, continued in her saintly strain.
"Supreme of gifts, which God creating gave
Of his free bounty, sign most evident
Of goodness, and in his account most priz'd,
Was liberty of will, the boon wherewith
All intellectual creatures, and them sole
He hath endow'd. Hence now thou mayst infer
Of what high worth the vow, which so is fram'd
That when man offers, God well-pleas'd accepts;
For in the compact between God and him,
This treasure, such as I describe it to thee,
He makes the victim, and of his own act.
What compensation therefore may he find?
If that, whereof thou hast oblation made,
By using well thou think'st to consecrate,
Thou would'st of theft do charitable deed.
Thus I resolve thee of the greater point.

”But forasmuch as holy church, herein
Dispensing, seems to contradict the truth
I have discover’d to thee, yet behooves
Thou rest a little longer at the board,
Ere the crude aliment, which thou hast taken,
Digested fitly to nutrition turn.
Open thy mind to what I now unfold,
And give it inward keeping. Knowledge comes
Of learning well retain’d, unfruitful else.

”This sacrifice in essence of two things
Consisteth; one is that, whereof ‘t is made,
The covenant the other. For the last,
It ne’er is cancell’d if not kept: and hence
I spake erewhile so strictly of its force.
For this it was enjoin’d the Israelites,
Though leave were giv’n them, as thou know’st, to change
The offering, still to offer. Th’ other part,
The matter and the substance of the vow,
May well be such, to that without offence
It may for other substance be exchang’d.
But at his own discretion none may shift
The burden on his shoulders, unreleas’d
By either key, the yellow and the white.
Nor deem of any change, as less than vain,
If the last bond be not within the new
Included, as the quatre in the six.
No satisfaction therefore can be paid
For what so precious in the balance weighs,
That all in counterpoise must kick the beam.
Take then no vow at random: ta’en, with faith
Preserve it; yet not bent, as Jephthah once,
Blindly to execute a rash resolve,
Whom better it had suited to exclaim,
‘I have done ill,’ than to redeem his pledge
By doing worse or, not unlike to him
In folly, that great leader of the Greeks:
Whence, on the alter, Iphigenia mourn’d
Her virgin beauty, and hath since made mourn

Both wise and simple, even all, who hear
Of so fell sacrifice. Be ye more staid,
O Christians, not, like feather, by each wind
Removable: nor think to cleanse ourselves
In every water. Either testament,
The old and new, is yours: and for your guide
The shepherd of the church let this suffice
To save you. When by evil lust entic'd,
Remember ye be men, not senseless beasts;
Nor let the Jew, who dwelleth in your streets,
Hold you in mock'ry. Be not, as the lamb,
That, fickle wanton, leaves its mother's milk,
To dally with itself in idle play."

Such were the words that Beatrice spake:
These ended, to that region, where the world
Is liveliest, full of fond desire she turn'd.

Though mainly prompt new question to propose,
Her silence and chang'd look did keep me dumb.
And as the arrow, ere the cord is still,
Leapeth unto its mark; so on we sped
Into the second realm. There I beheld
The dame, so joyous enter, that the orb
Grew brighter at her smiles; and, if the star
Were mov'd to gladness, what then was my cheer,
Whom nature hath made apt for every change!

As in a quiet and clear lake the fish,
If aught approach them from without, do draw
Towards it, deeming it their food; so drew
Full more than thousand splendours towards us,
And in each one was heard: “Lo! one arriv’d
To multiply our loves!” and as each came
The shadow, streaming forth effulgence new,
Witness’d augmented joy. Here, reader! think,
If thou didst miss the sequel of my tale,
To know the rest how sorely thou wouldst crave;
And thou shalt see what vehement desire
Possess’d me, as soon as these had met my view,
To know their state. ”O born in happy hour!
Thou to whom grace vouchsafes, or ere thy close
Of fleshly warfare, to behold the thrones

Of that eternal triumph, know to us
The light communicated, which through heaven
Expatiates without bound. Therefore, if aught
Thou of our beams wouldst borrow for thine aid,
Spare not; and of our radiance take thy fill."

Thus of those piteous spirits one bespake me;
And Beatrice next: "Say on; and trust
As unto gods!"— "How in the light supreme
Thou harbour'st, and from thence the virtue bring'st,
That, sparkling in thine eyes, denotes thy joy,
l mark; but, who thou art, am still to seek;
Or wherefore, worthy spirit! for thy lot
This sphere assign'd, that oft from mortal ken
Is veil'd by others' beams." I said, and turn'd
Toward the lustre, that with greeting, kind
Erewhile had hail'd me. Forthwith brighter far
Than erst, it wax'd: and, as himself the sun
Hides through excess of light, when his warm gaze
Hath on the mantle of thick vapours prey'd;
Within its proper ray the saintly shape
Was, through increase of gladness, thus conceal'd;
And, shrouded so in splendour answer'd me,
E'en as the tenour of my song declares.

CANTO VI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"After that Constantine the eagle turn'd
Against the motions of the heav'n, that roll'd
Consenting with its course, when he of yore,
Lavinia's spouse, was leader of the flight,
A hundred years twice told and more, his seat
At Europe's extreme point, the bird of Jove
Held, near the mountains, whence he issued first.
There, under shadow of his sacred plumes
Swaying the world, till through successive hands
To mine he came devolv'd. Caesar I was,
And am Justinian; destin'd by the will
Of that prime love, whose influence I feel,
From vain excess to clear th' encumber'd laws.
Or ere that work engag'd me, I did hold
Christ's nature merely human, with such faith
Contented. But the blessed Agapete,
Who was chief shepherd, he with warning voice
To the true faith recall'd me. I believ'd
His words: and what he taught, now plainly see,
As thou in every contradiction seest
The true and false oppos'd. Soon as my feet
Were to the church reclaim'd, to my great task,
By inspiration of God's grace impell'd,
I gave me wholly, and consign'd mine arms
To Belisarius, with whom heaven's right hand
Was link'd in such conjointment, 't was a sign
That I should rest. To thy first question thus
I shape mine answer, which were ended here,
But that its tendency doth prompt perforce
To some addition; that thou well, mayst mark
What reason on each side they have to plead,
By whom that holiest banner is withstood,
Both who pretend its power and who oppose.
"Beginning from that hour, when Pallas died

To give it rule, behold the valorous deeds
Have made it worthy reverence. Not unknown
To thee, how for three hundred years and more
It dwelt in Alba, up to those fell lists
Where for its sake were met the rival three;
Nor aught unknown to thee, which it achiev'd
Down to the Sabines' wrong to Lucrece' woe,
With its sev'n kings conqu'ring the nation round;
Nor all it wrought, by Roman worthies home
'Gainst Brennus and th' Epirot prince, and hosts
Of single chiefs, or states in league combin'd
Of social warfare; hence Torquatus stern,
And Quintius nam'd of his neglected locks,
The Decii, and the Fabii hence acquir'd
Their fame, which I with duteous zeal embalm.
By it the pride of Arab hordes was quell'd,
When they led on by Hannibal o'erpass'd
The Alpine rocks, whence glide thy currents, Po!
Beneath its guidance, in their prime of days
Scipio and Pompey triumph'd; and that hill,
Under whose summit thou didst see the light,
Rued its stern bearing. After, near the hour,
When heav'n was minded that o'er all the world
His own deep calm should brood, to Caesar's hand
Did Rome consign it; and what then it wrought
From Var unto the Rhine, saw Isere's flood,
Saw Loire and Seine, and every vale, that fills
The torrent Rhone. What after that it wrought,
When from Ravenna it came forth, and leap'd
The Rubicon, was of so bold a flight,
That tongue nor pen may follow it. Tow'rds Spain
It wheel'd its bands, then tow'rd Dyrrachium smote,
And on Pharsalia with so fierce a plunge,
E'en the warm Nile was conscious to the pang;
Its native shores Antandros, and the streams
Of Simois revisited, and there
Where Hector lies; then ill for Ptolemy
His pennons shook again; lightning thence fell

On Juba; and the next upon your west,
At sound of the Pompeian trump, return'd.

"What following and in its next bearer's gripe
It wrought, is now by Cassius and Brutus
Bark'd off in hell, and by Perugia's sons
And Modena's was mourn'd. Hence weepeth still
Sad Cleopatra, who, pursued by it,
Took from the adder black and sudden death.
With him it ran e'en to the Red Sea coast;
With him compos'd the world to such a peace,
That of his temple Janus barr'd the door.

"But all the mighty standard yet had wrought,
And was appointed to perform thereafter,
Throughout the mortal kingdom which it sway'd,
Falls in appearance dwindled and obscur'd,
If one with steady eye and perfect thought
On the third Caesar look; for to his hands,
The living Justice, in whose breath I move,
Committed glory, e'en into his hands,
To execute the vengeance of its wrath.

"Hear now and wonder at what next I tell.
After with Titus it was sent to wreak
Vengeance for vengeance of the ancient sin,
And, when the Lombard tooth, with fangs impure,
Did gore the bosom of the holy church,
Under its wings victorious, Charlemagne
Sped to her rescue. Judge then for thyself
Of those, whom I erewhile accus'd to thee,
What they are, and how grievous their offending,
Who are the cause of all your ills. The one
Against the universal ensign rears
The yellow lilies, and with partial aim
That to himself the other arrogates:
So that 't is hard to see which more offends.
Be yours, ye Ghibellines, to veil your arts
Beneath another standard: ill is this

Follow'd of him, who severs it and justice:
And let not with his Guelphs the new-crown'd Charles
Assail it, but those talons hold in dread,
Which from a lion of more lofty port
Have rent the easing. Many a time ere now
The sons have for the sire's transgression wail'd;
Nor let him trust the fond belief, that heav'n
Will truck its armour for his lilied shield.

"This little star is furnish'd with good spirits,
Whose mortal lives were busied to that end,
That honour and renown might wait on them:
And, when desires thus err in their intention,
True love must needs ascend with slacker beam.
But it is part of our delight, to measure
Our wages with the merit; and admire
The close proportion. Hence doth heav'nly justice
Temper so evenly affection in us,
It ne'er can warp to any wrongfulness.
Of diverse voices is sweet music made:
So in our life the different degrees
Render sweet harmony among these wheels.

"Within the pearl, that now encloseth us,
Shines Romeo's light, whose goodly deed and fair
Met ill acceptance. But the Provencals,
That were his foes, have little cause for mirth.
Ill shapes that man his course, who makes his wrong
Of other's worth. Four daughters were there born
To Raymond Berenger, and every one
Became a queen; and this for him did Romeo,
Though of mean state and from a foreign land.
Yet envious tongues incited him to ask
A reckoning of that just one, who return'd
Twelve fold to him for ten. Aged and poor
He parted thence: and if the world did know
The heart he had, begging his life by morsels,
'T would deem the praise, it yields him, scantly dealt."

CANTO VII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"Hosanna Sanctus Deus Sabaoth
Superillustrans claritate tua
Felices ignes horum malahoth!"
Thus chanting saw I turn that substance bright
With fourfold lustre to its orb again,
Revolving; and the rest unto their dance
With it mov'd also; and like swiftest sparks,
In sudden distance from my sight were veil'd.

Me doubt possess'd, and "Speak," it whisper'd me,
"Speak, speak unto thy lady, that she quench
Thy thirst with drops of sweetness." Yet blank awe,
Which lords it o'er me, even at the sound
Of Beatrice's name, did bow me down
As one in slumber held. Not long that mood
Beatrice suffer'd: she, with such a smile,
As might have made one blest amid the flames,
Beaming upon me, thus her words began:
"Thou in thy thought art pond'ring (as I deem),
And what I deem is truth how just revenge
Could be with justice punish'd: from which doubt
I soon will free thee; so thou mark my words;
For they of weighty matter shall possess thee.

"That man, who was unborn, himself condemn'd,
And, in himself, all, who since him have liv'd,
His offspring: whence, below, the human kind
Lay sick in grievous error many an age;
Until it pleas'd the Word of God to come
Amongst them down, to his own person joining
The nature, from its Maker far estrang'd,
By the mere act of his eternal love.
Contemplate here the wonder I unfold.
The nature with its Maker thus conjoin'd,
Created first was blameless, pure and good;

But through itself alone was driven forth
From Paradise, because it had eschew'd
The way of truth and life, to evil turn'd.
Ne'er then was penalty so just as that
Inflicted by the cross, if thou regard
The nature in assumption doom'd: ne'er wrong
So great, in reference to him, who took
Such nature on him, and endur'd the doom.
God therefore and the Jews one sentence pleased:
So different effects flow'd from one act,
And heav'n was open'd, though the earth did quake.
Count it not hard henceforth, when thou dost hear
That a just vengeance was by righteous court
Justly reveng'd. But yet I see thy mind
By thought on thought arising sore perplex'd,
And with how vehement desire it asks
Solution of the maze. What I have heard,
Is plain, thou sayst: but wherefore God this way
For our redemption chose, eludes my search.

"Brother! no eye of man not perfected,
Nor fully ripen'd in the flame of love,
May fathom this decree. It is a mark,
In sooth, much aim'd at, and but little kenn'd:
And I will therefore show thee why such way
Was worthiest. The celestial love, that spume
All envying in its bounty, in itself
With such effulgence blazeth, as sends forth
All beauteous things eternal. What distils
Immediate thence, no end of being knows,
Bearing its seal immutably impress'd.
Whatever thence immediate falls, is free,
Free wholly, uncontrollable by power
Of each thing new: by such conformity
More grateful to its author, whose bright beams,
Though all partake their shining, yet in those
Are liveliest, which resemble him the most.
These tokens of pre-eminence on man
Largely bestow'd, if any of them fail,

He needs must forfeit his nobility,
No longer stainless. Sin alone is that,
Which doth disfranchise him, and make unlike
To the chief good; for that its light in him
Is darken'd. And to dignity thus lost
Is no return; unless, where guilt makes void,
He for ill pleasure pay with equal pain.
Your nature, which entirely in its seed
Trangress'd, from these distinctions fell, no less
Than from its state in Paradise; nor means
Found of recovery (search all methods out
As strickly as thou may) save one of these,
The only fords were left through which to wade,
Either that God had of his courtesy
Releas'd him merely, or else man himself
For his own folly by himself aton'd.

"Fix now thine eye, intently as thou canst,
On th' everlasting counsel, and explore,
Instructed by my words, the dread abyss.

"Man in himself had ever lack'd the means
Of satisfaction, for he could not stoop
Obeying, in humility so low,
As high he, disobeying, thought to soar:
And for this reason he had vainly tried
Out of his own sufficiency to pay
The rigid satisfaction. Then behooved
That God should by his own ways lead him back
Unto the life, from whence he fell, restor'd:
By both his ways, I mean, or one alone.
But since the deed is ever priz'd the more,
The more the doer's good intent appears,
Goodness celestial, whose broad signature
Is on the universe, of all its ways
To raise ye up, was fain to leave out none,
Nor aught so vast or so magnificent,
Either for him who gave or who receiv'd
Between the last night and the primal day,

Was or can be. For God more bounty show'd.
Giving himself to make man capable
Of his return to life, than had the terms
Been mere and unconditional release.
And for his justice, every method else
Were all too scant, had not the Son of God
Humbled himself to put on mortal flesh.

"Now, to fulfil each wish of thine, remains
I somewhat further to thy view unfold.
That thou mayst see as clearly as myself.

"I see, thou sayst, the air, the fire I see,
The earth and water, and all things of them
Compounded, to corruption turn, and soon
Dissolve. Yet these were also things create,
Because, if what were told me, had been true
They from corruption had been therefore free.

"The angels, O my brother! and this clime
Wherein thou art, impassible and pure,
I call created, as indeed they are
In their whole being. But the elements,
Which thou hast nam'd, and what of them is made,
Are by created virtue' inform'd: create
Their substance, and create the' informing virtue
In these bright stars, that round them circling move
The soul of every brute and of each plant,
The ray and motion of the sacred lights,
With complex potency attract and turn.
But this our life the' eternal good inspires
Immediate, and enamours of itself;
So that our wishes rest for ever here.

"And hence thou mayst by inference conclude
Our resurrection certain, if thy mind
Consider how the human flesh was fram'd,
When both our parents at the first were made."

CANTO VIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

The world was in its day of peril dark
Wont to believe the dotage of fond love
From the fair Cyprian deity, who rolls
In her third epicycle, shed on men
By stream of potent radiance: therefore they
Of elder time, in their old error blind,
Not her alone with sacrifice ador'd
And invocation, but like honours paid
To Cupid and Dione, deem'd of them
Her mother, and her son, him whom they feign'd
To sit in Dido's bosom: and from her,
Whom I have sung preluding, borrow'd they
The appellation of that star, which views,
Now obvious and now averse, the sun.

I was not ware that I was wafted up
Into its orb; but the new loveliness
That grac'd my lady, gave me ample proof
That we had entered there. And as in flame
A sparkle is distinct, or voice in voice
Discern'd, when one its even tenour keeps,
The other comes and goes; so in that light
I other luminaries saw, that cours'd
In circling motion rapid more or less,
As their eternal phases each impels.

Never was blast from vapour charged with cold,
Whether invisible to eye or no,
Descended with such speed, it had not seem'd
To linger in dull tardiness, compar'd
To those celestial lights, that tow'rds us came,
Leaving the circuit of their joyous ring,
Conducted by the lofty seraphim.
And after them, who in the van appear'd,
Such an hosanna sounded, as hath left

Desire, ne'er since extinct in me, to hear
Renew'd the strain. Then parting from the rest
One near us drew, and sole began: "We all
Are ready at thy pleasure, well dispos'd
To do thee gentle service. We are they,
To whom thou in the world erewhile didst Sing
'O ye! whose intellectual ministry
Moves the third heaven!' and in one orb we roll,
One motion, one impulse, with those who rule
Princedoms in heaven; yet are of love so full,
That to please thee 't will be as sweet to rest."

After mine eyes had with meek reverence
Sought the celestial guide, and were by her
Assur'd, they turn'd again unto the light
Who had so largely promis'd, and with voice
That bare the lively pressure of my zeal,
"Tell who ye are," I cried. Forthwith it grew
In size and splendour, through augmented joy;
And thus it answer'd: "A short date below
The world possess'd me. Had the time been more,
Much evil, that will come, had never chanc'd.
My gladness hides thee from me, which doth shine
Around, and shroud me, as an animal
In its own silk unswath'd. Thou lov'dst me well,
And had'st good cause; for had my sojourning
Been longer on the earth, the love I bare thee
Had put forth more than blossoms. The left bank,
That Rhone, when he hath mix'd with Sorga, laves."

“In me its lord expected, and that horn
Of fair Ausonia, with its boroughs old,
Bari, and Croton, and Gaeta pil’d,
From where the Trento disembogues his waves,
With Verde mingled, to the salt sea-flood.
Already on my temples beam’d the crown,
Which gave me sov’reignty over the land
By Danube wash’d, whenas he strays beyond
The limits of his German shores. The realm,
Where, on the gulf by stormy Eurus lash’d,
Betwixt Pelorus and Pachynian heights,
The beautiful Trinacria lies in gloom
(Not through Typhaeus, but the vap’ry cloud
Bituminous upsteam’d), THAT too did look
To have its scepter wielded by a race

Of monarchs, sprung through me from Charles and Rodolph;
had not ill lording which doth spirit up
The people ever, in Palermo rais'd
The shout of 'death,' re-echo'd loud and long.
Had but my brother's foresight kenn'd as much,
He had been warier that the greedy want
Of Catalonia might not work his bale.
And truly need there is, that he forecast,
Or other for him, lest more freight be laid
On his already over-laden bark.
Nature in him, from bounty fall'n to thrift,
Would ask the guard of braver arms, than such
As only care to have their coffers fill'd."

"My liege, it doth enhance the joy thy words
Infuse into me, mighty as it is,
To think my gladness manifest to thee,
As to myself, who own it, when thou lookst
Into the source and limit of all good,
There, where thou markest that which thou dost speak,
Thence priz'd of me the more. Glad thou hast made me.
Now make intelligent, clearing the doubt
Thy speech hath raised in me; for much I muse,
How bitter can spring up, when sweet is sown."

I thus inquiring; he forthwith replied:
"If I have power to show one truth, soon that
Shall face thee, which thy questioning declares
Behind thee now conceal'd. The Good, that guides
And blessed makes this realm, which thou dost mount,
Ordains its providence to be the virtue
In these great bodies: nor th' all perfect Mind
Upholds their nature merely, but in them
Their energy to save: for nought, that lies
Within the range of that unerring bow,
But is as level with the destin'd aim,
As ever mark to arrow's point oppos'd.
Were it not thus, these heavens, thou dost visit,
Would their effect so work, it would not be

Art, but destruction; and this may not chance,
If th' intellectual powers, that move these stars,
Fail not, or who, first faulty made them fail.
Wilt thou this truth more clearly evidenc'd?"

To whom I thus: "It is enough: no fear,
I see, lest nature in her part should tire."

He straight rejoin'd: "Say, were it worse for man,
If he liv'd not in fellowship on earth?"

"Yea," answer'd I; "nor here a reason needs."

"And may that be, if different estates
Grow not of different duties in your life?
Consult your teacher, and he tells you 'no."'

Thus did he come, deducing to this point,
And then concluded: "For this cause behooves,
The roots, from whence your operations come,
Must differ. Therefore one is Solon born;
Another, Xerxes; and Melchisidec
A third; and he a fourth, whose airy voyage
Cost him his son. In her circuitous course,
Nature, that is the seal to mortal wax,
Doth well her art, but no distinctions owns
'Twixt one or other household. Hence befalls
That Esau is so wide of Jacob: hence
Quirinus of so base a father springs,
He dates from Mars his lineage. Were it not
That providence celestial overrul'd,
Nature, in generation, must the path
Trac'd by the generator, still pursue
Unswervingly. Thus place I in thy sight
That, which was late behind thee. But, in sign
Of more affection for thee, 't is my will
Thou wear this corollary. Nature ever
Finding discordant fortune, like all seed
Out of its proper climate, thrives but ill.

And were the world below content to mark
And work on the foundation nature lays,
It would not lack supply of excellence.
But ye perversely to religion strain
Him, who was born to gird on him the sword,
And of the fluent phrasemen make your king;
Therefore your steps have wander’d from the paths.”

CANTO IX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

After solution of my doubt, thy Charles,
O fair Clemenza, of the treachery spake
That must befall his seed: but, "Tell it not,"
Said he, "and let the destin'd years come round."
Nor may I tell thee more, save that the meed
Of sorrow well-deserv'd shall quit your wrongs.

And now the visage of that saintly light
Was to the sun, that fills it, turn'd again,
As to the good, whose plenitude of bliss
Sufficeth all. O ye misguided souls!
Infatuate, who from such a good estrange
Your hearts, and bend your gaze on vanity,
Alas for you! — And lo! toward me, next,
Another of those splendent forms approach'd,
That, by its outward bright'ning, testified
The will it had to pleasure me. The eyes
Of Beatrice, resting, as before,
Firmly upon me, manifested forth
Approval of my wish. "And O," I cried,
"Blest spirit! quickly be my will perform'd;
And prove thou to me, that my inmost thoughts
I can reflect on thee." Thereat the light,
That yet was new to me, from the recess,
Where it before was singing, thus began,
As one who joys in kindness: "In that part
Of the deprav'd Italian land, which lies
Between Rialto, and the fountain-springs
Of Brenta and of Piava, there doth rise,
But to no lofty eminence, a hill,
From whence erewhile a firebrand did descend,
That sorely sheet the region. From one root
I and it sprang; my name on earth Cunizza:
And here I glitter, for that by its light

This star o'ercame me. Yet I naught repine,
Nor grudge myself the cause of this my lot,
Which haply vulgar hearts can scarce conceive.

"This jewel, that is next me in our heaven,
Lustrous and costly, great renown hath left,
And not to perish, ere these hundred years
Five times absolve their round. Consider thou,
If to excel be worthy man's endeavour,
When such life may attend the first. Yet they
Care not for this, the crowd that now are girt
By Adice and Tagliamento, still
Impenitent, tho' scourg'd. The hour is near,
When for their stubbornness at Padua's marsh
The water shall be chang'd, that laves Vicena
And where Cagnano meets with Sile, one
Lords it, and bears his head aloft, for whom
The web is now a-warping. Feltro too
Shall sorrow for its godless shepherd's fault,
Of so deep stain, that never, for the like,
Was Malta's bar unclos'd. Too large should be
The skillet, that would hold Ferrara's blood,
And wearied he, who ounce by ounce would weight it,
The which this priest, in show of party-zeal,
Courteous will give; nor will the gift ill suit
The country's custom. We descry above,
Mirrors, ye call them thrones, from which to us
Reflected shine the judgments of our God:
Whence these our sayings we avouch for good."

She ended, and appear'd on other thoughts
Intent, re-ent'ring on the wheel she late
Had left. That other joyance meanwhile wax'd
A thing to marvel at, in splendour glowing,
Like choicest ruby stricken by the sun,
For, in that upper clime, effulgence comes
Of gladness, as here laughter: and below,
As the mind saddens, murkier grows the shade.

”God seeth all: and in him is thy sight,”
Said I, “blest Spirit! Therefore will of his
Cannot to thee be dark. Why then delays
Thy voice to satisfy my wish untold,
That voice which joins the inexpressive song,
Pastime of heav’n, the which those ardours sing,
That cowl them with six shadowing wings outspread?
I would not wait thy asking, wert thou known
To me, as thoroughly I to thee am known.”

He forthwith answ’ring, thus his words began:
“The valley’ of waters, widest next to that
Which doth the earth engarland, shapes its course,
Between discordant shores, against the sun
Inward so far, it makes meridian there,
Where was before th’ horizon. Of that vale
Dwelt I upon the shore, ‘twixt Ebro’s stream
And Macra’s, that divides with passage brief
Genoan bounds from Tuscan. East and west
Are nearly one to Begga and my land,
Whose haven erst was with its own blood warm.
Who knew my name were wont to call me Folco:
And I did bear impression of this heav’n,
That now bears mine: for not with fiercer flame
Glow’d Belus’ daughter, injuring alike
Sichaeus and Creusa, than did I,
Long as it suited the unripen’d down
That fledg’d my cheek: nor she of Rhodope,
That was beguiled of Demophoon;
Nor Jove’s son, when the charms of Iole
Were shrin’d within his heart. And yet there hides
No sorrowful repentance here, but mirth,
Not for the fault (that doth not come to mind),
But for the virtue, whose o’erruling sway
And providence have wrought thus quaintly. Here
The skill is look’d into, that fashioneth
With such effectual working, and the good
Discern’d, accruing to this upper world
From that below. But fully to content

Thy wishes, all that in this sphere have birth,
Demands my further parle. Inquire thou wouldst,
Who of this light is denizen, that here
Beside me sparkles, as the sun-beam doth
On the clear wave. Know then, the soul of Rahab
Is in that gladsome harbour, to our tribe
United, and the foremost rank assign'd.
He to that heav'n, at which the shadow ends
Of your sublunar world, was taken up,
First, in Christ's triumph, of all souls redeem'd:
For well behoov'd, that, in some part of heav'n,
She should remain a trophy, to declare
The mighty contest won with either palm;
For that she favour'd first the high exploit
Of Joshua on the holy land, whereof
The Pope recks little now. Thy city, plant
Of him, that on his Maker turn'd the back,
And of whose envying so much woe hath sprung,
Engenders and expands the cursed flower,
That hath made wander both the sheep and lambs,
Turning the shepherd to a wolf. For this,
The gospel and great teachers laid aside,
The decretals, as their stuft margins show,
Are the sole study. Pope and Cardinals,
Intent on these, ne'er journey but in thought
To Nazareth, where Gabriel op'd his wings.
Yet it may chance, erelong, the Vatican,
And other most selected parts of Rome,
That were the grave of Peter's soldiery,
Shall be deliver'd from the adult'rous bond."

CANTO X

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Looking into his first-born with the love,
Which breathes from both eternal, the first Might
Ineffable, whence eye or mind
Can roam, hath in such order all dispos'd,
As none may see and fail to enjoy. Raise, then,
O reader! to the lofty wheels, with me,
Thy ken directed to the point, whereat
One motion strikes on th' other. There begin
Thy wonder of the mighty Architect,
Who loves his work so inwardly, his eye
Doth ever watch it. See, how thence oblique
Brancheth the circle, where the planets roll
To pour their wished influence on the world;
Whose path not bending thus, in heav'n above
Much virtue would be lost, and here on earth,
All power well nigh extinct: or, from direct
Were its departure distant more or less,
I' th' universal order, great defect
Must, both in heav'n and here beneath, ensue.

Now rest thee, reader! on thy bench, and muse
Anticipative of the feast to come;
So shall delight make thee not feel thy toil.
Lo! I have set before thee, for thyself
Feed now: the matter I indite, henceforth
Demands entire my thought. Join'd with the part,
Which late we told of, the great minister
Of nature, that upon the world imprints
The virtue of the heaven, and doles out
Time for us with his beam, went circling on
Along the spires, where each hour sooner comes;
And I was with him, weetless of ascent,
As one, who till arriv'd, weets not his coming.

For Beatrice, she who passeth on
So suddenly from good to better, time
Counts not the act, oh then how great must needs
Have been her brightness! What she was i' th' sun
(Where I had enter'd), not through change of hue,
But light transparent — did I summon up
Genius, art, practice — I might not so speak,
It should be e'er imagin'd: yet believ'd
It may be, and the sight be justly crav'd.
And if our fantasy fail of such height,
What marvel, since no eye above the sun
Hath ever travel'd? Such are they dwell here,
Fourth family of the Omnipotent Sire,
Who of his spirit and of his offspring shows;
And holds them still enraptur'd with the view.
And thus to me Beatrice: "Thank, oh thank,
The Sun of angels, him, who by his grace
To this perceptible hath lifted thee."

Never was heart in such devotion bound,
And with complacency so absolute
Dispos'd to render up itself to God,
As mine was at those words: and so entire
The love for Him, that held me, it eclips'd
Beatrice in oblivion. Naught displeas'd
Was she, but smil'd thereat so joyously,
That of her laughing eyes the radiance brake
And scatter'd my collected mind abroad.

Then saw I a bright band, in liveliness
Surpassing, who themselves did make the crown,
And us their centre: yet more sweet in voice,
Than in their visage beaming. Cinctur'd thus,
Sometime Latona's daughter we behold,
When the impregnate air retains the thread,
That weaves her zone. In the celestial court,
Whence I return, are many jewels found,
So dear and beautiful, they cannot brook
Transporting from that realm: and of these lights

Such was the song. Who doth not prune his wing
To soar up thither, let him look from thence
For tidings from the dumb. When, singing thus,
Those burning suns that circled round us thrice,
As nearest stars around the fixed pole,
Then seem'd they like to ladies, from the dance
Not ceasing, but suspense, in silent pause,
List'ning, till they have caught the strain anew:
Suspended so they stood: and, from within,
Thus heard I one, who spake: "Since with its beam
The grace, whence true love lighteth first his flame,
That after doth increase by loving, shines
So multiplied in thee, it leads thee up
Along this ladder, down whose hallow'd steps
None e'er descend, and mount them not again,
Who from his phial should refuse thee wine
To slake thy thirst, no less constrained were,
Than water flowing not unto the sea.
Thou fain wouldst hear, what plants are these, that bloom
In the bright garland, which, admiring, girds
This fair dame round, who strengthens thee for heav'n.
I then was of the lambs, that Dominic
Leads, for his saintly flock, along the way,
Where well they thrive, not sworn with vanity.
He, nearest on my right hand, brother was,
And master to me: Albert of Cologne
Is this: and of Aquinum, Thomas I.
If thou of all the rest wouldst be assur'd,
Let thine eye, waiting on the words I speak,
In circuit journey round the blessed wreath.
That next resplendence issues from the smile
Of Gratian, who to either forum lent
Such help, as favour wins in Paradise.
The other, nearest, who adorns our quire,
Was Peter, he that with the widow gave
To holy church his treasure. The fifth light,
Goodliest of all, is by such love inspired,
That all your world craves tidings of its doom:
Within, there is the lofty light, endow'd

With sapience so profound, if truth be truth,
That with a ken of such wide amplitude
No second hath arisen. Next behold
That taper's radiance, to whose view was shown,
Clearliest, the nature and the ministry
Angelical, while yet in flesh it dwelt.
In the other little light serenely smiles
That pleader for the Christian temples, he
Who did provide Augustin of his lore.
Now, if thy mind's eye pass from light to light,
Upon my praises following, of the eighth
Thy thirst is next. The saintly soul, that shows
The world's deceitfulness, to all who hear him,
Is, with the sight of all the good, that is,
Blest there. The limbs, whence it was driven, lie
Down in Cieldauro, and from martyrdom
And exile came it here. Lo! further on,
Where flames the arduous Spirit of Isidore,
Of Bede, and Richard, more than man, erewhile,
In deep discernment. Lastly this, from whom
Thy look on me reverteth, was the beam
Of one, whose spirit, on high musings bent,
Rebuk'd the ling'ring tardiness of death.
It is the eternal light of Sigebert,
Who 'scap'd not envy, when of truth he argued,
Reading in the straw-litter'd street." Forthwith,
As clock, that calleth up the spouse of God
To win her bridegroom's love at matin's hour,
Each part of other fitly drawn and urg'd,
Sends out a tinkling sound, of note so sweet,
Affection springs in well-disposed breast;
Thus saw I move the glorious wheel, thus heard
Voice answ'ring voice, so musical and soft,
It can be known but where day endless shines.

CANTO XI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

O fond anxiety of mortal men!
How vain and inconclusive arguments
Are those, which make thee beat thy wings below
For statues one, and one for aphorisms
Was hunting; this the priesthood follow'd, that
By force or sophistry aspir'd to rule;
To rob another, and another sought
By civil business wealth; one moiling lay
Tangled in net of sensual delight,
And one to witless indolence resign'd;
What time from all these empty things escap'd,
With Beatrice, I thus gloriously
Was rais'd aloft, and made the guest of heav'n.

They of the circle to that point, each one.
Where erst it was, had turn'd; and steady glow'd,
As candle in his socket. Then within
The lustre, that erewhile bespake me, smiling
With merer gladness, heard I thus begin:

"E'en as his beam illumes me, so I look
Into the eternal light, and clearly mark
Thy thoughts, from whence they rise. Thou art in doubt,
And wouldst, that I should bolt my words afresh
In such plain open phrase, as may be smooth
To thy perception, where I told thee late
That 'well they thrive;' and that 'no second such
Hath risen,' which no small distinction needs.

"The providence, that governeth the world,
In depth of counsel by created ken
Unfathomable, to the end that she,
Who with loud cries was 'spous'd in precious blood,
Might keep her footing towards her well-belov'd,
Safe in herself and constant unto him,

Hath two ordain’d, who should on either hand
In chief escort her: one seraphic all
In fervency; for wisdom upon earth,
The other splendour of cherubic light.
I but of one will tell: he tells of both,
Who one commendeth which of them so’er
Be taken: for their deeds were to one end.

”Between Tupino, and the wave, that falls
From blest Ubaldo’s chosen hill, there hangs
Rich slope of mountain high, whence heat and cold
Are wafted through Perugia’s eastern gate:
And Norcera with Gualdo, in its rear
Mourn for their heavy yoke. Upon that side,
Where it doth break its steepness most, arose
A sun upon the world, as duly this
From Ganges doth: therefore let none, who speak
Of that place, say Ascesi; for its name
Were lamely so deliver’d; but the East,
To call things rightly, be it henceforth styl’d.
He was not yet much distant from his rising,
When his good influence ‘gan to bless the earth.
A dame to whom none openeth pleasure’s gate
More than to death, was, ‘gainst his father’s will,
His stripling choice: and he did make her his,
Before the Spiritual court, by nuptial bonds,
And in his father’s sight: from day to day,
Then lov’d her more devoutly. She, bereav’d
Of her first husband, slighted and obscure,
Thousand and hundred years and more, remain’d
Without a single suitor, till he came.
Nor aught avail’d, that, with Amyclas, she
Was found unmov’d at rumour of his voice,
Who shook the world: nor aught her constant boldness
Whereby with Christ she mounted on the cross,
When Mary stay’d beneath. But not to deal
Thus closely with thee longer, take at large
The rovers’ titles — Poverty and Francis.
Their concord and glad looks, wonder and love,

And sweet regard gave birth to holy thoughts,
So much, that venerable Bernard first
Did bare his feet, and, in pursuit of peace
So heavenly, ran, yet deem'd his footing slow.
O hidden riches! O prolific good!
Egidius bares him next, and next Sylvester,
And follow both the bridegroom; so the bride
Can please them. Thenceforth goes he on his way,
The father and the master, with his spouse,
And with that family, whom now the cord
Girt humbly: nor did abjectness of heart
Weigh down his eyelids, for that he was son
Of Pietro Bernardone, and by men
In wond'rous sort despis'd. But royally
His hard intention he to Innocent
Set forth, and from him first receiv'd the seal
On his religion. Then, when numerous flock'd
The tribe of lowly ones, that trac'd HIS steps,
Whose marvellous life deservedly were sung
In heights empyreal, through Honorius' hand
A second crown, to deck their Guardian's virtues,
Was by the eternal Spirit inwreath'd: and when
He had, through thirst of martyrdom, stood up
In the proud Soldan's presence, and there preach'd
Christ and his followers; but found the race
Unripen'd for conversion: back once more
He hasted (not to intermit his toil),
And reap'd Ausonian lands. On the hard rock,
'Twixt Arno and the Tyber, he from Christ
Took the last Signet, which his limbs two years
Did carry. Then the season come, that he,
Who to such good had destin'd him, was pleas'd
T' advance him to the meed, which he had earn'd
By his self-humbling, to his brotherhood,
As their just heritage, he gave in charge
His dearest lady, and enjoin'd their love
And faith to her: and, from her bosom, will'd
His goodly spirit should move forth, returning

To its appointed kingdom, nor would have
His body laid upon another bier.

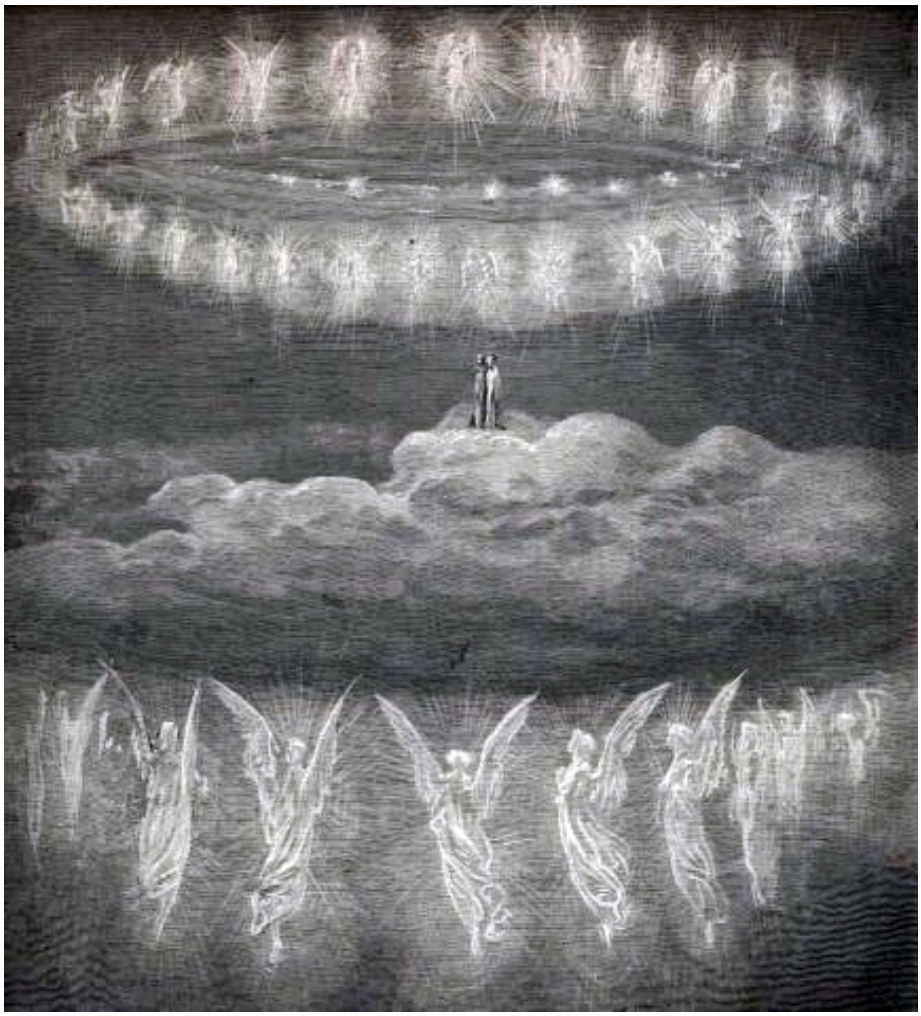
”Think now of one, who were a fit colleague,
To keep the bark of Peter in deep sea
Helm’d to right point; and such our Patriarch was.
Therefore who follow him, as he enjoins,
Thou mayst be certain, take good lading in.
But hunger of new viands tempts his flock,
So that they needs into strange pastures wide
Must spread them: and the more remote from him
The stragglers wander, so much mole they come
Home to the sheep-fold, destitute of milk.
There are of them, in truth, who fear their harm,
And to the shepherd cleave; but these so few,
A little stuff may furnish out their cloaks.

”Now, if my words be clear, if thou have ta’en
Good heed, if that, which I have told, recall
To mind, thy wish may be in part fulfill’d:
For thou wilt see the point from whence they split,
Nor miss of the reproof, which that implies,
‘That well they thrive not sworn with vanity.”’

CANTO XII

Table of Contents for ‘The Divine Comedy’

Soon as its final word the blessed flame
Had rais’d for utterance, straight the holy mill
Began to wheel, nor yet had once revolv’d,
Or ere another, circling, compass’d it,
Motion to motion, song to song, conjoining,
Song, that as much our muses doth excel,
Our Sirens with their tuneful pipes, as ray
Of primal splendour doth its faint reflex.



As when, if Juno bid her handmaid forth,
Two arches parallel, and trick’d alike,

Span the thin cloud, the outer taking birth
From that within (in manner of that voice
Whom love did melt away, as sun the mist),
And they who gaze, presageful call to mind
The compact, made with Noah, of the world
No more to be o'erflow'd; about us thus
Of sempiternal roses, bending, wreath'd
Those garlands twain, and to the innermost
E'en thus th' external answered. When the footing,
And other great festivity, of song,
And radiance, light with light accordant, each
Jocund and blythe, had at their pleasure still'd
(E'en as the eyes by quick volition mov'd,
Are shut and rais'd together), from the heart
Of one amongst the new lights mov'd a voice,
That made me seem like needle to the star,
In turning to its whereabout, and thus
Began: "The love, that makes me beautiful,
Prompts me to tell of th' other guide, for whom
Such good of mine is spoken. Where one is,
The other worthily should also be;
That as their warfare was alike, alike
Should be their glory. Slow, and full of doubt,
And with thin ranks, after its banner mov'd
The army of Christ (which it so clearly cost
To reappoint), when its imperial Head,
Who reigneth ever, for the drooping host
Did make provision, thorough grace alone,
And not through its deserving. As thou heard'st,
Two champions to the succour of his spouse
He sent, who by their deeds and words might join
Again his scatter'd people. In that clime,
Where springs the pleasant west-wind to unfold
The fresh leaves, with which Europe sees herself
New-garmented; nor from those billows far,
Beyond whose chiding, after weary course,
The sun doth sometimes hide him, safe abides
The happy Callaroga, under guard
Of the great shield, wherein the lion lies

Subjected and supreme. And there was born
The loving million of the Christian faith,
The hollow'd wrestler, gentle to his own,
And to his enemies terrible. So replete
His soul with lively virtue, that when first
Created, even in the mother's womb,
It prophesied. When, at the sacred font,
The spousals were complete 'twixt faith and him,
Where pledge of mutual safety was exchang'd,
The dame, who was his surety, in her sleep
Beheld the wondrous fruit, that was from him
And from his heirs to issue. And that such
He might be construed, as indeed he was,
She was inspir'd to name him of his owner,
Whose he was wholly, and so call'd him Dominic.
And I speak of him, as the labourer,
Whom Christ in his own garden chose to be
His help-mate. Messenger he seem'd, and friend
Fast-knit to Christ; and the first love he show'd,
Was after the first counsel that Christ gave.
Many a time his nurse, at entering found
That he had ris'n in silence, and was prostrate,
As who should say, "My errand was for this."
O happy father! Felix rightly nam'd!
O favour'd mother! rightly nam'd Joanna!
If that do mean, as men interpret it.
Not for the world's sake, for which now they pore
Upon Ostiense and Taddeo's page,
But for the real manna, soon he grew
Mighty in learning, and did set himself
To go about the vineyard, that soon turns
To wan and wither'd, if not tended well:
And from the see (whose bounty to the just
And needy is gone by, not through its fault,
But his who fills it basely, he besought,
No dispensation for commuted wrong,
Nor the first vacant fortune, nor the tenth),
That to God's paupers rightly appertain,
But, 'gainst an erring and degenerate world,

Licence to fight, in favour of that seed,
From which the twice twelve cions gird thee round.
Then, with sage doctrine and good will to help,
Forth on his great apostleship he far'd,
Like torrent bursting from a lofty vein;
And, dashing 'gainst the stocks of heresy,
Smote fiercest, where resistance was most stout.
Thence many rivulets have since been turn'd,
Over the garden Catholic to lead
Their living waters, and have fed its plants.

"If such one wheel of that two-yoked car,
Wherein the holy church defended her,
And rode triumphant through the civil broil.
Thou canst not doubt its fellow's excellence,
Which Thomas, ere my coming, hath declar'd
So courteously unto thee. But the track,
Which its smooth fellies made, is now deserted:
That mouldy mother is where late were lees.
His family, that wont to trace his path,
Turn backward, and invert their steps; erelong
To rue the gathering in of their ill crop,
When the rejected tares in vain shall ask
Admittance to the barn. I question not
But he, who search'd our volume, leaf by leaf,
Might still find page with this inscription on't,
'I am as I was wont.' Yet such were not
From Acquasparta nor Casale, whence
Of those, who come to meddle with the text,
One stretches and another cramps its rule.
Bonaventura's life in me behold,
From Bagnororegio, one, who in discharge
Of my great offices still laid aside
All sinister aim. Illuminato here,
And Agostino join me: two they were,
Among the first of those barefooted meek ones,
Who sought God's friendship in the cord: with them
Hugues of Saint Victor, Pietro Mangiadore,
And he of Spain in his twelve volumes shining,

Nathan the prophet, Metropolitan
Chrysostom, and Anselmo, and, who deign'd
To put his hand to the first art, Donatus.
Raban is here: and at my side there shines
Calabria's abbot, Joachim, endow'd
With soul prophetic. The bright courtesy
Of friar Thomas, and his goodly lore,
Have mov'd me to the blazon of a peer
So worthy, and with me have mov'd this throng."

CANTO XIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Let him, who would conceive what now I saw,
Imagine (and retain the image firm,
As mountain rock, the whilst he hears me speak),
Of stars fifteen, from midst the ethereal host
Selected, that, with lively ray serene,
O'ercome the massiest air: thereto imagine
The wain, that, in the bosom of our sky,
Spins ever on its axle night and day,
With the bright summit of that horn which swells
Due from the pole, round which the first wheel rolls,
T' have rang'd themselves in fashion of two signs
In heav'n, such as Ariadne made,
When death's chill seized her; and that one of them
Did compass in the other's beam; and both
In such sort whirl around, that each should tend
With opposite motion and, conceiving thus,
Of that true constellation, and the dance
Twofold, that circled me, he shall attain
As 't were the shadow; for things there as much
Surpass our usage, as the swiftest heav'n
Is swifter than the Chiana. There was sung
No Bacchus, and no Io Paean, but
Three Persons in the Godhead, and in one
Substance that nature and the human join'd.

The song fulfill'd its measure; and to us
Those saintly lights attended, happier made
At each new minist'ring. Then silence brake,
Amid th' accordant sons of Deity,
That luminary, in which the wondrous life
Of the meek man of God was told to me;
And thus it spake: "One ear o' th' harvest thresh'd,
And its grain safely stor'd, sweet charity
Invites me with the other to like toil.

”Thou know’st, that in the bosom, whence the rib
Was ta’en to fashion that fair cheek, whose taste
All the world pays for, and in that, which pierc’d
By the keen lance, both after and before
Such satisfaction offer’d, as outweighs
Each evil in the scale, whate’er of light
To human nature is allow’d, must all
Have by his virtue been infus’d, who form’d
Both one and other: and thou thence admir’st
In that I told thee, of beatitudes
A second, there is none, to his enclos’d
In the fifth radiance. Open now thine eyes
To what I answer thee; and thou shalt see
Thy deeming and my saying meet in truth,
As centre in the round. That which dies not,
And that which can die, are but each the beam
Of that idea, which our Soverign Sire
Engendereth loving; for that lively light,
Which passeth from his brightness; not disjoin’d
From him, nor from his love triune with them,
Doth, through his bounty, congregate itself,
Mirror’d, as ‘t were in new existences,
Itself unalterable and ever one.

”Descending hence unto the lowest powers,
Its energy so sinks, at last it makes
But brief contingencies: for so I name
Things generated, which the heav’nly orbs
Moving, with seed or without seed, produce.
Their wax, and that which molds it, differ much:
And thence with lustre, more or less, it shows
Th’ ideal stamp impress: so that one tree
According to his kind, hath better fruit,
And worse: and, at your birth, ye, mortal men,
Are in your talents various. Were the wax
Molded with nice exactness, and the heav’n
In its disposing influence supreme,
The lustre of the seal should be complete:
But nature renders it imperfect ever,

Resembling thus the artist in her work,
Whose faultering hand is faithless to his skill.
Howe'er, if love itself dispose, and mark
The primal virtue, kindling with bright view,
There all perfection is vouchsafed; and such
The clay was made, accomplish'd with each gift,
That life can teem with; such the burden fill'd
The virgin's bosom: so that I commend
Thy judgment, that the human nature ne'er
Was or can be, such as in them it was.

"Did I advance no further than this point,
'How then had he no peer?' thou might'st reply.
But, that what now appears not, may appear
Right plainly, ponder, who he was, and what
(When he was bidden 'Ask'), the motive sway'd
To his requesting. I have spoken thus,
That thou mayst see, he was a king, who ask'd
For wisdom, to the end he might be king
Sufficient: not the number to search out
Of the celestial movers; or to know,
If necessary with contingent e'er
Have made necessity; or whether that
Be granted, that first motion is; or if
Of the mid circle can, by art, be made
Triangle with each corner, blunt or sharp.

"Whence, noting that, which I have said, and this,
Thou kingly prudence and that ken mayst learn,
At which the dart of my intention aims.
And, marking clearly, that I told thee, 'Risen,'
Thou shalt discern it only hath respect
To kings, of whom are many, and the good
Are rare. With this distinction take my words;
And they may well consist with that which thou
Of the first human father dost believe,
And of our well-beloved. And let this
Henceforth be led unto thy feet, to make
Thee slow in motion, as a weary man,

Both to the ‘yea’ and to the ‘nay’ thou seest not.
For he among the fools is down full low,
Whose affirmation, or denial, is
Without distinction, in each case alike
Since it befalls, that in most instances
Current opinion leads to false: and then
Affection bends the judgment to her ply.

”Much more than vainly doth he loose from shore,
Since he returns not such as he set forth,
Who fishes for the truth and wanteth skill.
And open proofs of this unto the world
Have been afforded in Parmenides,
Melissus, Bryso, and the crowd beside,
Who journey’d on, and knew not whither: so did
Sabellius, Arius, and the other fools,
Who, like to scymitars, reflected back
The scripture-image, by distortion marr’d.

”Let not the people be too swift to judge,
As one who reckons on the blades in field,
Or ere the crop be ripe. For I have seen
The thorn frown rudely all the winter long
And after bear the rose upon its top;
And bark, that all the way across the sea
Ran straight and speedy, perish at the last,
E’en in the haven’s mouth seeing one steal,
Another brine, his offering to the priest,
Let not Dame Birtha and Sir Martin thence
Into heav’n’s counsels deem that they can pry:
For one of these may rise, the other fall.”

CANTO XIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

From centre to the circle, and so back
From circle to the centre, water moves
In the round chalice, even as the blow
Impels it, inwardly, or from without.
Such was the image glanc'd into my mind,
As the great spirit of Aquinum ceas'd;
And Beatrice after him her words
Resum'd alternate: "Need there is (tho' yet
He tells it to you not in words, nor e'en
In thought) that he should fathom to its depth
Another mystery. Tell him, if the light,
Wherewith your substance blooms, shall stay with you
Eternally, as now: and, if it doth,
How, when ye shall regain your visible forms,
The sight may without harm endure the change,
That also tell." As those, who in a ring
Tread the light measure, in their fitful mirth
Raise loud the voice, and spring with gladder bound;
Thus, at the hearing of that pious suit,
The saintly circles in their tourneying
And wond'rous note attested new delight.

Whoso laments, that we must doff this garb
Of frail mortality, thenceforth to live
Immortally above, he hath not seen
The sweet refreshing, of that heav'nly shower.

Him, who lives ever, and for ever reigns
In mystic union of the Three in One,
Unbounded, bounding all, each spirit thrice
Sang, with such melody, as but to hear
For highest merit were an ample meed.
And from the lesser orb the goodliest light,
With gentle voice and mild, such as perhaps
The angel's once to Mary, thus replied:

“Long as the joy of Paradise shall last,
Our love shall shine around that raiment, bright,
As fervent; fervent, as in vision blest;
And that as far in blessedness exceeding,
As it hath grave beyond its virtue great.
Our shape, regarmented with glorious weeds
Of saintly flesh, must, being thus entire,
Show yet more gracious. Therefore shall increase,
Whate’er of light, gratuitous, imparts
The Supreme Good; light, ministering aid,
The better disclose his glory: whence
The vision needs increasing, much increase
The fervour, which it kindles; and that too
The ray, that comes from it. But as the greed
Which gives out flame, yet it its whiteness shines
More lively than that, and so preserves
Its proper semblance; thus this circling sphere
Of splendour, shall to view less radiant seem,
Than shall our fleshly robe, which yonder earth
Now covers. Nor will such excess of light
O’erpower us, in corporeal organs made
Firm, and susceptible of all delight.”

So ready and so cordial an “Amen,”
Followed from either choir, as plainly spoke
Desire of their dead bodies; yet perchance
Not for themselves, but for their kindred dear,
Mothers and sires, and those whom best they lov’d,
Ere they were made imperishable flame.

And lo! forthwith there rose up round about
A lustre over that already there,
Of equal clearness, like the brightening up
Of the horizon. As at an evening hour
Of twilight, new appearances through heav’n
Peer with faint glimmer, doubtfully descried;
So there new substances, methought began
To rise in view; and round the other twain
Enwheeling, sweep their ampler circuit wide.

O gentle glitter of eternal beam!
With what a such whiteness did it flow,
O’erpowering vision in me! But so fair,
So passing lovely, Beatrice show’d,
Mind cannot follow it, nor words express
Her infinite sweetness. Thence mine eyes regain’d
Power to look up, and I beheld myself,
Sole with my lady, to more lofty bliss
Translated: for the star, with warmer smile
Impurpled, well denoted our ascent.

With all the heart, and with that tongue which speaks
The same in all, an holocaust I made
To God, befitting the new grace vouchsaf’d.
And from my bosom had not yet upsteam’d

The fuming of that incense, when I knew
The rite accepted. With such mighty sheen
And mantling crimson, in two listed rays
The splendours shot before me, that I cried,
“God of Sabaoth! that does prank them thus!”

As leads the galaxy from pole to pole,
Distinguish’d into greater lights and less,
Its pathway, which the wisest fail to spell;
So thickly studded, in the depth of Mars,
Those rays describ’d the venerable sign,
That quadrants in the round conjoining frame.
Here memory mocks the toil of genius. Christ
Beam’d on that cross; and pattern fails me now.
But whoso takes his cross, and follows Christ

Will pardon me for that I leave untold,
When in the flecker'd dawning he shall spy
The glitterance of Christ. From horn to horn,
And 'tween the summit and the base did move
Lights, scintillating, as they met and pass'd.
Thus oft are seen, with ever-changeful glance,
Straight or athwart, now rapid and now slow,
The atomies of bodies, long or short,
To move along the sunbeam, whose slant line
Checkers the shadow, interpos'd by art
Against the noontide heat. And as the chime
Of minstrel music, dulcimer, and help
With many strings, a pleasant dining makes
To him, who heareth not distinct the note;
So from the lights, which there appear'd to me,
Gather'd along the cross a melody,
That, indistinctly heard, with ravishment
Possess'd me. Yet I mark'd it was a hymn
Of lofty praises; for there came to me
"Arise and conquer," as to one who hears
And comprehends not. Me such ecstasy
O'ercame, that never till that hour was thing
That held me in so sweet imprisonment.

Perhaps my saying over bold appears,
Accounting less the pleasure of those eyes,
Whereon to look fulfilleth all desire.
But he, who is aware those living seals
Of every beauty work with quicker force,
The higher they are ris'n; and that there
I had not turn'd me to them; he may well
Excuse me that, whereof in my excuse
I do accuse me, and may own my truth;
That holy pleasure here not yet reveal'd,
Which grows in transport as we mount aloof.

CANTO XV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

True love, that ever shows itself as clear
In kindness, as loose appetite in wrong,
Silenced that lyre harmonious, and still'd
The sacred chords, that are by heav'n's right hand
Unwound and tighten'd, flow to righteous prayers
Should they not hearken, who, to give me will
For praying, in accordance thus were mute?
He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,
Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,
Despoils himself forever of that love.

As oft along the still and pure serene,
At nightfall, glides a sudden trail of fire,
Attracting with involuntary heed
The eye to follow it, erewhile at rest,
And seems some star that shifted place in heav'n,
Only that, whence it kindles, none is lost,
And it is soon extinct; thus from the horn,
That on the dexter of the cross extends,
Down to its foot, one luminary ran
From mid the cluster shone there; yet no gem
Dropp'd from its foil; and through the beamy list
Like flame in alabaster, glow'd its course.

So forward stretch'd him (if of credence aught
Our greater muse may claim) the pious ghost
Of old Anchises, in the' Elysian bower,
When he perceiv'd his son. "O thou, my blood!
O most exceeding grace divine! to whom,
As now to thee, hath twice the heav'nly gate
Been e'er unclos'd?" so spake the light; whence I
Turn'd me toward him; then unto my dame
My sight directed, and on either side
Amazement waited me; for in her eyes
Was lighted such a smile, I thought that mine

Had div'd unto the bottom of my grace
And of my bliss in Paradise. Forthwith
To hearing and to sight grateful alike,
The spirit to his proem added things
I understood not, so profound he spake;
Yet not of choice but through necessity
Mysterious; for his high conception scar'd
Beyond the mark of mortals. When the flight
Of holy transport had so spent its rage,
That nearer to the level of our thought
The speech descended, the first sounds I heard
Were, "Best he thou, Triunal Deity!
That hast such favour in my seed vouchsaf'd!"
Then follow'd: "No unpleasant thirst, tho' long,
Which took me reading in the sacred book,
Whose leaves or white or dusky never change,
Thou hast allay'd, my son, within this light,
From whence my voice thou hear'st; more thanks to her.
Who for such lofty mounting has with plumes
Begirt thee. Thou dost deem thy thoughts to me
From him transmitted, who is first of all,
E'en as all numbers ray from unity;
And therefore dost not ask me who I am,
Or why to thee more joyous I appear,
Than any other in this gladsome throng.
The truth is as thou deem'st; for in this hue
Both less and greater in that mirror look,
In which thy thoughts, or ere thou think'st, are shown.
But, that the love, which keeps me wakeful ever,
Urging with sacred thirst of sweet desire,
May be contended fully, let thy voice,
Fearless, and frank and jocund, utter forth
Thy will distinctly, utter forth the wish,
Whereto my ready answer stands decreed."

I turn'd me to Beatrice; and she heard
Ere I had spoken, smiling, an assent,
That to my will gave wings; and I began
"To each among your tribe, what time ye kenn'd

The nature, in whom naught unequal dwells,
Wisdom and love were in one measure dealt;
For that they are so equal in the sun,
From whence ye drew your radiance and your heat,
As makes all likeness scant. But will and means,
In mortals, for the cause ye well discern,
With unlike wings are fledge. A mortal I
Experience inequality like this,
And therefore give no thanks, but in the heart,
For thy paternal greeting. This howe'er
I pray thee, living topaz! that ingemm'st
This precious jewel, let me hear thy name."

"I am thy root, O leaf! whom to expect
Even, hath pleas'd me:" thus the prompt reply
Prefacing, next it added: "he, of whom
Thy kindred appellation comes, and who,
These hundred years and more, on its first ledge
Hath circuited the mountain, was my son
And thy great grandsire. Well befits, his long
Endurance should be shorten'd by thy deeds.

"Florence, within her ancient limit-mark,
Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,
Was chaste and sober, and abode in peace.
She had no armlets and no head-tires then,
No purfled dames, no zone, that caught the eye
More than the person did. Time was not yet,
When at his daughter's birth the sire grew pale.
For fear the age and dowry should exceed
On each side just proportion. House was none
Void of its family; nor yet had come
Hardanapalus, to exhibit feats
Of chamber prowess. Montemalo yet
O'er our suburban turret rose; as much
To be surpass in fall, as in its rising.
I saw Bellincione Berti walk abroad
In leathern girdle and a clasp of bone;
And, with no artful colouring on her cheeks,

His lady leave the glass. The sons I saw
Of Nerli and of Vecchio well content
With unrob'd jerkin; and their good dames handling
The spindle and the flax; O happy they!
Each sure of burial in her native land,
And none left desolate a-bed for France!
One wak'd to tend the cradle, hushing it
With sounds that lull'd the parent's infancy:
Another, with her maidens, drawing off
The tresses from the distaff, lectur'd them
Old tales of Troy and Fesole and Rome.
A Salterello and Cianghella we
Had held as strange a marvel, as ye would
A Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.

"In such compos'd and seemly fellowship,
Such faithful and such fair equality,
In so sweet household, Mary at my birth
Bestow'd me, call'd on with loud cries; and there
In your old baptistery, I was made
Christian at once and Cacciaguida; as were
My brethren, Eliseo and Moronto.

"From Valdipado came to me my spouse,
And hence thy surname grew. I follow'd then
The Emperor Conrad; and his knighthood he
Did gird on me; in such good part he took
My valiant service. After him I went
To testify against that evil law,
Whose people, by the shepherd's fault, possess
Your right, usurping. There, by that foul crew
Was I releas'd from the deceitful world,
Whose base affection many a spirit soils,
And from the martyrdom came to this peace."

CANTO XVI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

O slight respect of man's nobility!
I never shall account it marvelous,
That our infirm affection here below
Thou mov'st to boasting, when I could not choose,
E'en in that region of unwarp'd desire,
In heav'n itself, but make my vaunt in thee!
Yet cloak thou art soon shorten'd, for that time,
Unless thou be eked out from day to day,
Goes round thee with his shears. Resuming then
With greeting such, as Rome, was first to bear,
But since hath disaccustom'd I began;
And Beatrice, that a little space
Was sever'd, smil'd reminding me of her,
Whose cough embolden'd (as the story holds)
To first offence the doubting Guenever.

"You are my sire," said I, "you give me heart
Freely to speak my thought: above myself
You raise me. Through so many streams with joy
My soul is fill'd, that gladness wells from it;
So that it bears the mighty tide, and bursts not
Say then, my honour'd stem! what ancestors
Where those you sprang from, and what years were mark'd
In your first childhood? Tell me of the fold,
That hath Saint John for guardian, what was then
Its state, and who in it were highest seated?"

As embers, at the breathing of the wind,
Their flame enliven, so that light I saw
Shine at my blandishments; and, as it grew
More fair to look on, so with voice more sweet,
Yet not in this our modern phrase, forthwith
It answer'd: "From the day, when it was said
'Hail Virgin!' to the throes, by which my mother,
Who now is sainted, lighten'd her of me

Whom she was heavy with, this fire had come,
Five hundred fifty times and thrice, its beams
To reilumine underneath the foot
Of its own lion. They, of whom I sprang,
And I, had there our birth-place, where the last
Partition of our city first is reach'd
By him, that runs her annual game. Thus much
Suffice of my forefathers: who they were,
And whence they hither came, more honourable
It is to pass in silence than to tell.
All those, who in that time were there from Mars
Until the Baptist, fit to carry arms,
Were but the fifth of them this day alive.
But then the citizen's blood, that now is mix'd
From Campi and Certaldo and Fighine,
Ran purely through the last mechanic's veins.
O how much better were it, that these people
Were neighbours to you, and that at Galluzzo
And at Trespiano, ye should have your bound'ry,
Than to have them within, and bear the stench
Of Aguglione's hind, and Signa's, him,
That hath his eye already keen for bart'ring!
Had not the people, which of all the world
Degenerates most, been stepdame unto Caesar,
But, as a mother, gracious to her son;
Such one, as hath become a Florentine,
And trades and traffics, had been turn'd adrift
To Simifonte, where his grandsire ply'd
The beggar's craft. The Conti were possess'd
Of Montemurlo still: the Cerchi still
Were in Acone's parish; nor had haply
From Valdigrieve past the Buondelmonte.
The city's malady hath ever source
In the confusion of its persons, as
The body's, in variety of food:
And the blind bull falls with a steeper plunge,
Than the blind lamb; and oftentimes one sword
Doth more and better execution,
Than five. Mark Luni, Urbisaglia mark,

How they are gone, and after them how go
Chiusi and Sinigaglia; and ‘t will seem
No longer new or strange to thee to hear,
That families fail, when cities have their end.
All things, that appertain t’ ye, like yourselves,
Are mortal: but mortality in some
Ye mark not, they endure so long, and you
Pass by so suddenly. And as the moon
Doth, by the rolling of her heav’nly sphere,
Hide and reveal the strand unceasingly;
So fortune deals with Florence. Hence admire not
At what of them I tell thee, whose renown
Time covers, the first Florentines. I saw
The Ughi, Catilini and Filippi,
The Alberichi, Greci and Ormanni,
Now in their wane, illustrious citizens:
And great as ancient, of Sannella him,
With him of Arca saw, and Soldanieri
And Ardinghi, and Bostichi. At the poop,
That now is laden with new felony,
So cumb’rous it may speedily sink the bark,
The Ravignani sat, of whom is sprung
The County Guido, and whoso hath since
His title from the fam’d Bellincione ta’en.
Fair governance was yet an art well priz’d
By him of Pressa: Galigaio show’d
The gilded hilt and pommel, in his house.
The column, cloth’d with verrey, still was seen
Unshaken: the Sacchetti still were great,
Giouchi, Sifanti, Galli and Barucci,
With them who blush to hear the bushel nam’d.
Of the Calfucci still the branchy trunk
Was in its strength: and to the curule chairs
Sizii and Arigucci yet were drawn.
How mighty them I saw, whom since their pride
Hath undone! and in all her goodly deeds
Florence was by the bullets of bright gold
O’erflourish’d. Such the sires of those, who now,
As surely as your church is vacant, flock

Into her consistory, and at leisure
There stall them and grow fat. The o'erweening brood,
That plays the dragon after him that flees,
But unto such, as turn and show the tooth,
Ay or the purse, is gentle as a lamb,
Was on its rise, but yet so slight esteem'd,
That Ubertino of Donati grudg'd
His father-in-law should yoke him to its tribe.
Already Caponsacco had descended
Into the mart from Fesole: and Giuda
And Infangato were good citizens.
A thing incredible I tell, tho' true:
The gateway, named from those of Pera, led
Into the narrow circuit of your walls.
Each one, who bears the sightly quarterings
Of the great Baron (he whose name and worth
The festival of Thomas still revives)
His knighthood and his privilege retain'd;
Albeit one, who borders them With gold,
This day is mingled with the common herd.
In Borgo yet the Gualterotti dwelt,
And Importuni: well for its repose
Had it still lack'd of newer neighbourhood.
The house, from whence your tears have had their spring,
Through the just anger that hath murder'd ye
And put a period to your gladsome days,
Was honour'd, it, and those consorted with it.
O Buondelmonte! what ill counseling
Prevail'd on thee to break the plighted bond
Many, who now are weeping, would rejoice,
Had God to Ema giv'n thee, the first time
Thou near our city cam'st. But so was doom'd:
On that maim'd stone set up to guard the bridge,
At thy last peace, the victim, Florence! fell.
With these and others like to them, I saw
Florence in such assur'd tranquility,
She had no cause at which to grieve: with these
Saw her so glorious and so just, that ne'er

The lily from the lance had hung reverse,
Or through division been with vermeil dyed.”

CANTO XVII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Such as the youth, who came to Clymene
To certify himself of that reproach,
Which had been fasten'd on him, (he whose end
Still makes the fathers chary to their sons),
E'en such was I; nor unobserv'd was such
Of Beatrice, and that saintly lamp,
Who had erewhile for me his station mov'd;
When thus by lady: "Give thy wish free vent,
That it may issue, bearing true report
Of the mind's impress; not that aught thy words
May to our knowledge add, but to the end,
That thou mayst use thyself to own thy thirst
And men may mingle for thee when they hear."

"O plant! from whence I spring! rever'd and lov'd!
Who soar'st so high a pitch, thou seest as clear,
As earthly thought determines two obtuse
In one triangle not contain'd, so clear
Dost see contingencies, ere in themselves
Existent, looking at the point whereto
All times are present, I, the whilst I scal'd
With Virgil the soul purifying mount,
And visited the nether world of woe,
Touching my future destiny have heard
Words grievous, though I feel me on all sides
Well squar'd to fortune's blows. Therefore my will
Were satisfied to know the lot awaits me,
The arrow, seen beforehand, slacks its flight."

So said I to the brightness, which erewhile
To me had spoken, and my will declar'd,
As Beatrice will'd, explicitly.
Nor with oracular response obscure,
Such, as or ere the Lamb of God was slain,
Beguil'd the credulous nations; but, in terms

Precise and unambiguous lore, replied
The spirit of paternal love, enshrin'd,
Yet in his smile apparent; and thus spake:
"Contingency, unfolded not to view
Upon the tablet of your mortal mold,
Is all depictur'd in the' eternal sight;
But hence deriveth not necessity,
More then the tall ship, hurried down the flood,
Doth from the vision, that reflects the scene.
From thence, as to the ear sweet harmony
From organ comes, so comes before mine eye
The time prepar'd for thee. Such as driv'n out
From Athens, by his cruel stepdame's wiles,
Hippolytus departed, such must thou
Depart from Florence. This they wish, and this
Contrive, and will ere long effectuate, there,
Where gainful merchandize is made of Christ,
Throughout the livelong day. The common cry,
Will, as 't is ever wont, affix the blame
Unto the party injur'd: but the truth
Shall, in the vengeance it dispenseth, find
A faithful witness. Thou shall leave each thing
Belov'd most dearly: this is the first shaft
Shot from the bow of exile. Thou shalt prove
How salt the savour is of other's bread,
How hard the passage to descend and climb
By other's stairs, But that shall gall thee most
Will be the worthless and vile company,
With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.
For all ungrateful, impious all and mad,
Shall turn 'gainst thee: but in a little while
Theirs and not thine shall be the crimson'd brow
Their course shall so evince their brutishness
T' have ta'en thy stand apart shall well become thee.

"First refuge thou must find, first place of rest,
In the great Lombard's courtesy, who bears
Upon the ladder perch'd the sacred bird.
He shall behold thee with such kind regard,

That ‘twixt ye two, the contrary to that
Which falls ‘twixt other men, the granting shall
Forerun the asking. With him shalt thou see
That mortal, who was at his birth impress
So strongly from this star, that of his deeds
The nations shall take note. His unripe age
Yet holds him from observance; for these wheels
Only nine years have compass him about.
But, ere the Gascon practice on great Harry,
Sparkles of virtue shall shoot forth in him,
In equal scorn of labours and of gold.
His bounty shall be spread abroad so widely,
As not to let the tongues e’en of his foes
Be idle in its praise. Look thou to him
And his beneficence: for he shall cause
Reversal of their lot to many people,
Rich men and beggars interchanging fortunes.
And thou shalt bear this written in thy soul
Of him, but tell it not;” and things he told
Incredible to those who witness them;
Then added: “So interpret thou, my son,
What hath been told thee. — Lo! the ambushment
That a few circling seasons hide for thee!
Yet envy not thy neighbours: time extends
Thy span beyond their treason’s chastisement.”

Soon, as the saintly spirit, by his silence,
Had shown the web, which I had streteh’d for him
Upon the warp, was woven, I began,
As one, who in perplexity desires
Counsel of other, wise, benign and friendly:
“My father! well I mark how time spurs on
Toward me, ready to inflict the blow,
Which falls most heavily on him, who most
Abandoned himself. Therefore ‘t is good
I should forecast, that driven from the place
Most dear to me, I may not lose myself
All others by my song. Down through the world
Of infinite mourning, and along the mount

From whose fair height my lady's eyes did lift me,
And after through this heav'n from light to light,
Have I learnt that, which if I tell again,
It may with many woefully disrelish;
And, if I am a timid friend to truth,
I fear my life may perish among those,
To whom these days shall be of ancient date."

The brightness, where enclos'd the treasure smil'd,
Which I had found there, first shone glisteningly,
Like to a golden mirror in the sun;
Next answer'd: "Conscience, dimm'd or by its own
Or other's shame, will feel thy saying sharp.
Thou, notwithstanding, all deceit remov'd,
See the whole vision be made manifest.
And let them wince who have their withers wrung.
What though, when tasted first, thy voice shall prove
Unwelcome, on digestion it will turn
To vital nourishment. The cry thou raisest,
Shall, as the wind doth, smite the proudest summits;
Which is of honour no light argument,
For this there only have been shown to thee,
Throughout these orbs, the mountain, and the deep,
Spirits, whom fame hath note of. For the mind
Of him, who hears, is loth to acquiesce
And fix its faith, unless the instance brought
Be palpable, and proof apparent urge."

CANTO XVIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Now in his word, sole, ruminating, joy'd
That blessed spirit; and I fed on mine,
Tempting the sweet with bitter: she meanwhile,
Who led me unto God, admonish'd: "Muse
On other thoughts: bethink thee, that near Him
I dwell, who recompenseth every wrong."

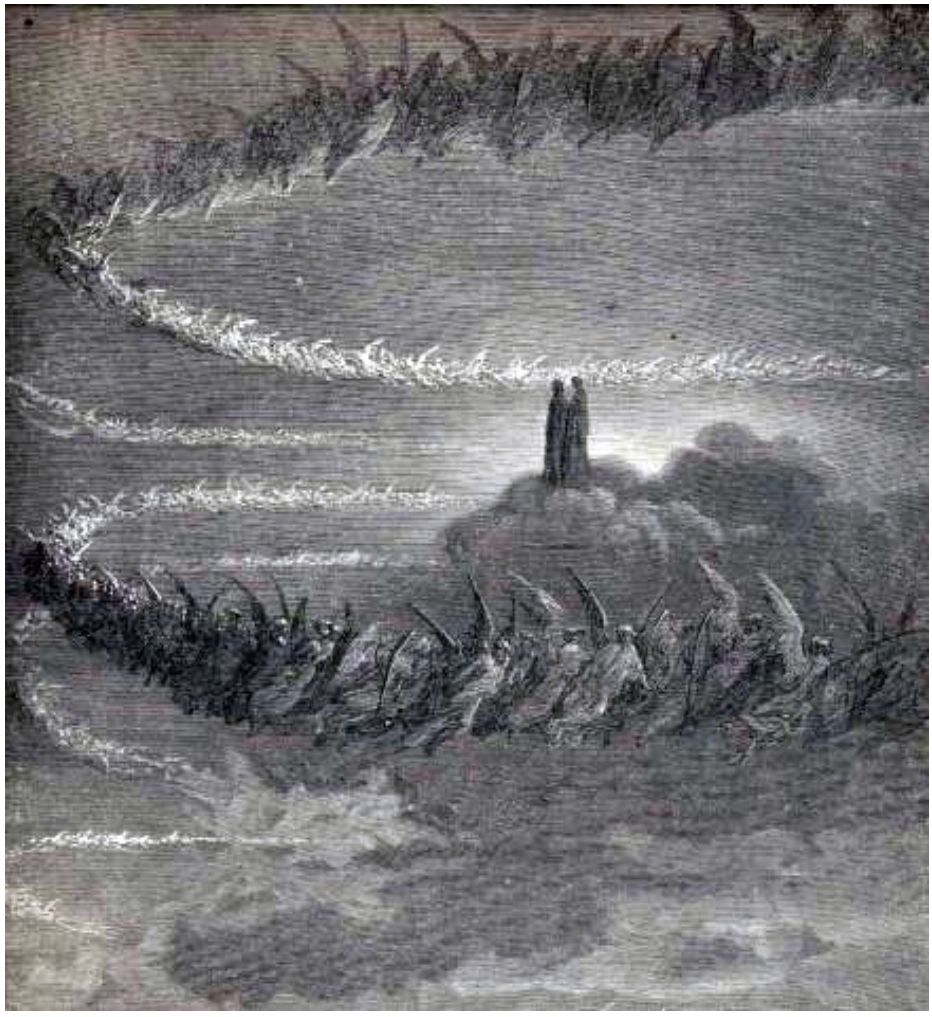
At the sweet sounds of comfort straight I turn'd;
And, in the saintly eyes what love was seen,
I leave in silence here: nor through distrust
Of my words only, but that to such bliss
The mind remounts not without aid. Thus much
Yet may I speak; that, as I gaz'd on her,
Affection found no room for other wish.
While the everlasting pleasure, that did full
On Beatrice shine, with second view
From her fair countenance my gladden'd soul
Contented; vanquishing me with a beam
Of her soft smile, she spake: "Turn thee, and list.
These eyes are not thy only Paradise."

As here we sometimes in the looks may see
Th' affection mark'd, when that its sway hath ta'en
The spirit wholly; thus the hallow'd light,
To whom I turn'd, flashing, bewray'd its will
To talk yet further with me, and began:
"On this fifth lodgment of the tree, whose life
Is from its top, whose fruit is ever fair
And leaf unwith'ring, blessed spirits abide,
That were below, ere they arriv'd in heav'n,
So mighty in renown, as every muse
Might grace her triumph with them. On the horns
Look therefore of the cross: he, whom I name,
Shall there enact, as doth in summer cloud
Its nimble fire." Along the cross I saw,

At the repeated name of Joshua,
A splendour gliding; nor, the word was said,
Ere it was done: then, at the naming saw
Of the great Maccabee, another move
With whirling speed; and gladness was the scourge
Unto that top. The next for Charlemagne
And for the peer Orlando, two my gaze
Pursued, intently, as the eye pursues
A falcon flying. Last, along the cross,
William, and Renard, and Duke Godfrey drew
My ken, and Robert Guiscard. And the soul,
Who spake with me among the other lights
Did move away, and mix; and with the choir
Of heav'nly songsters prov'd his tuneful skill.

To Beatrice on my right l bent,
Looking for intimation or by word
Or act, what next behoov'd: and did descry
Such mere effulgence in her eyes, such joy,
It past all former wont. And, as by sense
Of new delight, the man, who perseveres
In good deeds doth perceive from day to day
His virtue growing; I e'en thus perceiv'd
Of my ascent, together with the heav'n
The circuit widen'd, noting the increase
Of beauty in that wonder. Like the change
In a brief moment on some maiden's cheek,
Which from its fairness doth discharge the weight
Of pudency, that stain'd it; such in her,
And to mine eyes so sudden was the change,
Through silvery whiteness of that temperate star,
Whose sixth orb now enfolded us. I saw,
Within that Jovial cresset, the clear sparks
Of love, that reign'd there, fashion to my view
Our language. And as birds, from river banks
Arisen, now in round, now lengthen'd troop,
Array them in their flight, greeting, as seems,
Their new-found pastures; so, within the lights,

The saintly creatures flying, sang, and made
Now D. now I. now L. figur'd I' th' air.



First, singing, to their notes they mov'd, then one
Becoming of these signs, a little while
Did rest them, and were mute. O nymph divine
Of Pegasean race! whose souls, which thou
Inspir'st, mak'st glorious and long-liv'd, as they
Cities and realms by thee! thou with thyself
Inform me; that I may set forth the shapes,
As fancy doth present them. Be thy power
Display'd in this brief song. The characters,
Vocal and consonant, were five-fold seven.
In order each, as they appear'd, I mark'd.
Diligite Justitiam, the first,

Both verb and noun all blazon'd; and the extreme
Qui judicatis terram. In the M.
Of the fifth word they held their station,
Making the star seem silver streak'd with gold.
And on the summit of the M. I saw
Descending other lights, that rested there,
Singing, methinks, their bliss and primal good.
Then, as at shaking of a lighted brand,
Sparkles innumerable on all sides
Rise scatter'd, source of augury to th' unwise;
Thus more than thousand twinkling lustres hence
Seem'd reascending, and a higher pitch
Some mounting, and some less; e'en as the sun,
Which kindleth them, decreed. And when each one
Had settled in his place, the head and neck
Then saw I of an eagle, lively
Grav'd in that streaky fire. Who painteth there,
Hath none to guide him; of himself he guides;
And every line and texture of the nest
Doth own from him the virtue, fashions it.
The other bright beatitude, that seem'd
Erewhile, with lilied crowning, well content
To over-canopy the M. mov'd forth,
Following gently the impress of the bird.

Sweet star! what glorious and thick-studded gems
Declar'd to me our justice on the earth
To be the effluence of that heav'n, which thou,
Thyself a costly jewel, dost inlay!
Therefore I pray the Sovran Mind, from whom
Thy motion and thy virtue are begun,
That he would look from whence the fog doth rise,
To vitiate thy beam: so that once more
He may put forth his hand 'gainst such, as drive
Their traffic in that sanctuary, whose walls
With miracles and martyrdoms were built.

Ye host of heaven! whose glory I survey l
O beg ye grace for those, that are on earth
All after ill example gone astray.
War once had for its instrument the sword:
But now ‘t is made, taking the bread away
Which the good Father locks from none. — And thou,
That writes but to cancel, think, that they,
Who for the vineyard, which thou wastest, died,
Peter and Paul live yet, and mark thy doings.
Thou hast good cause to cry, “My heart so cleaves
To him, that liv’d in solitude remote,
And from the wilds was dragg’d to martyrdom,
I wist not of the fisherman nor Paul.”

CANTO XIX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Before my sight appear'd, with open wings,
The beauteous image, in fruition sweet
Gladdening the thronged spirits. Each did seem
A little ruby, whereon so intense
The sun-beam glow'd that to mine eyes it came
In clear refraction. And that, which next
Befalls me to portray, voice hath not utter'd,
Nor hath ink written, nor in fantasy
Was e'er conceiv'd. For I beheld and heard
The beak discourse; and, what intention form'd
Of many, singly as of one express,

Beginning: “For that I was just and piteous,
l am exalted to this height of glory,
The which no wish exceeds: and there on earth
Have I my memory left, e’en by the bad
Commended, while they leave its course untrod.”

Thus is one heat from many embers felt,
As in that image many were the loves,
And one the voice, that issued from them all.
Whence I address them: “O perennial flowers
Of gladness everlasting! that exhale
In single breath your odours manifold!
Breathe now; and let the hunger be appeas’d,
That with great craving long hath held my soul,
Finding no food on earth. This well I know,
That if there be in heav’n a realm, that shows
In faithful mirror the celestial Justice,
Yours without veil reflects it. Ye discern
The heed, wherewith I do prepare myself
To hearken; ye the doubt that urges me
With such inveterate craving.” Straight I saw,
Like to a falcon issuing from the hood,
That rears his head, and claps him with his wings,
His beauty and his eagerness bewraying.
So saw I move that stately sign, with praise
Of grace divine inwoven and high song
Of inexpressive joy. ”He,” it began,
“Who turn’d his compass on the world’s extreme,
And in that space so variously hath wrought,
Both openly, and in secret, in such wise
Could not through all the universe display
Impression of his glory, that the Word
Of his omniscience should not still remain
In infinite excess. In proof whereof,
He first through pride supplanted, who was sum
Of each created being, waited not
For light celestial, and abortive fell.
Whence needs each lesser nature is but scant
Receptacle unto that Good, which knows

No limit, measur'd by itself alone.
Therefore your sight, of th' omnipresent Mind
A single beam, its origin must own
Surpassing far its utmost potency.
The ken, your world is gifted with, descends
In th' everlasting Justice as low down,
As eye doth in the sea; which though it mark
The bottom from the shore, in the wide main
Discerns it not; and ne'ertheless it is,
But hidden through its deepness. Light is none,
Save that which cometh from the pure serene
Of ne'er disturbed ether: for the rest,
'Tis darkness all, or shadow of the flesh,
Or else its poison. Here confess reveal'd
That covert, which hath hidden from thy search
The living justice, of the which thou mad'st
Such frequent question; for thou saidst— 'A man
Is born on Indus' banks, and none is there
Who speaks of Christ, nor who doth read nor write,
And all his inclinations and his acts,
As far as human reason sees, are good,
And he offendeth not in word or deed.
But unbaptiz'd he dies, and void of faith.
Where is the justice that condemns him? where
His blame, if he believeth not?' — What then,
And who art thou, that on the stool wouldst sit
To judge at distance of a thousand miles
With the short-sighted vision of a span?
To him, who subtilizes thus with me,
There would assuredly be room for doubt
Even to wonder, did not the safe word
Of scripture hold supreme authority.

"O animals of clay! O spirits gross I
The primal will, that in itself is good,
Hath from itself, the chief Good, ne'er been mov'd.
Justice consists in consonance with it,
Derivable by no created good,
Whose very cause depends upon its beam."

As on her nest the stork, that turns about
Unto her young, whom lately she hath fed,
While they with upward eyes do look on her;
So lifted I my gaze; and bending so
The ever-blessed image wav'd its wings,
Lab'ring with such deep counsel. Wheeling round
It warbled, and did say: "As are my notes
To thee, who understand'st them not, such is
Th' eternal judgment unto mortal ken."

Then still abiding in that ensign rang'd,
Wherewith the Romans over-awed the world,
Those burning splendours of the Holy Spirit
Took up the strain; and thus it spake again:
"None ever hath ascended to this realm,
Who hath not a believer been in Christ,
Either before or after the blest limbs
Were nail'd upon the wood. But lo! of those
Who call 'Christ, Christ,' there shall be many found,
In judgment, further off from him by far,
Than such, to whom his name was never known.
Christians like these the Ethiop shall condemn:
When that the two assemblages shall part;
One rich eternally, the other poor.

"What may the Persians say unto your kings,
When they shall see that volume, in the which
All their dispraise is written, spread to view?
There amidst Albert's works shall that be read,
Which will give speedy motion to the pen,
When Prague shall mourn her desolated realm.
There shall be read the woe, that he doth work
With his adulterate money on the Seine,
Who by the tusk will perish: there be read
The thirsting pride, that maketh fool alike
The English and Scot, impatient of their bound.
There shall be seen the Spaniard's luxury,
The delicate living there of the Bohemian,
Who still to worth has been a willing stranger.

The halter of Jerusalem shall see
A unit for his virtue, for his vices
No less a mark than million. He, who guards
The isle of fire by old Anchises honour'd
Shall find his avarice there and cowardice;
And better to denote his littleness,
The writing must be letters maim'd, that speak
Much in a narrow space. All there shall know
His uncle and his brother's filthy doings,
Who so renown'd a nation and two crowns
Have bastardized. And they, of Portugal
And Norway, there shall be expos'd with him
Of Ratza, who hath counterfeited ill
The coin of Venice. O blest Hungary!
If thou no longer patiently abid'st
Thy ill-entreating! and, O blest Navarre!
If with thy mountainous girdle thou wouldst arm thee
In earnest of that day, e'en now are heard
Wailings and groans in Famagosta's streets
And Nicosia's, grudging at their beast,
Who keepeth even footing with the rest."

CANTO XX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

When, disappearing, from our hemisphere,
The world's enlightener vanishes, and day
On all sides wasteth, suddenly the sky,
Erewhile irradiate only with his beam,
Is yet again unfolded, putting forth
Innumerable lights wherein one shines.
Of such vicissitude in heaven I thought,
As the great sign, that marshaleth the world
And the world's leaders, in the blessed beak
Was silent; for that all those living lights,
Waxing in splendour, burst forth into songs,
Such as from memory glide and fall away.

Sweet love! that dost apparel thee in smiles,
How lustrous was thy semblance in those sparkles,
Which merely are from holy thoughts inspir’d!

After the precious and bright beaming stones,
That did ingem the sixth light, ceas’d the chiming
Of their angelic bells; methought I heard
The murmuring of a river, that doth fall
From rock to rock transpicuous, making known
The richness of his spring-head: and as sound
Of cistern, at the fret-board, or of pipe,
Is, at the wind-hole, modulate and tun’d;
Thus up the neck, as it were hollow, rose
That murmuring of the eagle, and forthwith
Voice there assum’d, and thence along the beak

Issued in form of words, such as my heart
Did look for, on whose tables I inscrib'd them.

"The part in me, that sees, and bears the sun,,
In mortal eagles," it began, "must now
Be noted steadfastly: for of the fires,
That figure me, those, glittering in mine eye,
Are chief of all the greatest. This, that shines
Midmost for pupil, was the same, who sang
The Holy Spirit's song, and bare about
The ark from town to town; now doth he know
The merit of his soul-impassion'd strains
By their well-fitted guerdon. Of the five,
That make the circle of the vision, he
Who to the beak is nearest, comforted
The widow for her son: now doth he know
How dear he costeth not to follow Christ,
Both from experience of this pleasant life,
And of its opposite. He next, who follows
In the circumference, for the over arch,
By true repenting slack'd the pace of death:
Now knoweth he, that the degrees of heav'n
Alter not, when through pious prayer below
Today's is made tomorrow's destiny.
The other following, with the laws and me,
To yield the shepherd room, pass'd o'er to Greece,
From good intent producing evil fruit:
Now knoweth he, how all the ill, deriv'd
From his well doing, doth not helm him aught,
Though it have brought destruction on the world.
That, which thou seest in the under bow,
Was William, whom that land bewails, which weeps
For Charles and Frederick living: now he knows
How well is lov'd in heav'n the righteous king,
Which he betokens by his radiant seeming.
Who in the erring world beneath would deem,
That Trojan Ripheus in this round was set
Fifth of the saintly splendours? now he knows
Enough of that, which the world cannot see,

The grace divine, albeit e'en his sight
Reach not its utmost depth." Like to the lark,
That warbling in the air expatiates long,
Then, trilling out his last sweet melody,
Drops satiate with the sweetness; such appear'd
That image stampt by the' everlasting pleasure,
Which fashions like itself all lovely things.

I, though my doubting were as manifest,
As is through glass the hue that mantles it,
In silence waited not: for to my lips
"What things are these?" involuntary rush'd,
And forc'd a passage out: whereat I mark'd
A sudden lightening and new revelry.
The eye was kindled: and the blessed sign
No more to keep me wond'ring and suspense,
Replied: "I see that thou believ'st these things,
Because I tell them, but discern'st not how;
So that thy knowledge waits not on thy faith:
As one who knows the name of thing by rote,
But is a stranger to its properties,
Till other's tongue reveal them. Fervent love
And lively hope with violence assail
The kingdom of the heavens, and overcome
The will of the Most high; not in such sort
As man prevails o'er man; but conquers it,
Because 't is willing to be conquer'd, still,
Though conquer'd, by its mercy conquering.

"Those, in the eye who live the first and fifth,
Cause thee to marvel, in that thou behold'st
The region of the angels deck'd with them.
They quitted not their bodies, as thou deem'st,
Gentiles but Christians, in firm rooted faith,
This of the feet in future to be pierc'd,
That of feet nail'd already to the cross.
One from the barrier of the dark abyss,
Where never any with good will returns,
Came back unto his bones. Of lively hope

Such was the meed; of lively hope, that wing'd
The prayers sent up to God for his release,
And put power into them to bend his will.
The glorious Spirit, of whom I speak to thee,
A little while returning to the flesh,
Believ'd in him, who had the means to help,
And, in believing, nourish'd such a flame
Of holy love, that at the second death
He was made sharer in our gamesome mirth.
The other, through the riches of that grace,
Which from so deep a fountain doth distil,
As never eye created saw its rising,
Plac'd all his love below on just and right:
Wherefore of grace God op'd in him the eye
To the redemption of mankind to come;
Wherein believing, he endur'd no more
The filth of paganism, and for their ways
Rebuk'd the stubborn nations. The three nymphs,
Whom at the right wheel thou beheldst advancing,
Were sponsors for him more than thousand years
Before baptizing. O how far remov'd,
Predestination! is thy root from such
As see not the First cause entire: and ye,
O mortal men! be wary how ye judge:
For we, who see our Maker, know not yet
The number of the chosen: and esteem
Such scantiness of knowledge our delight:
For all our good is in that primal good
Concentrate, and God's will and ours are one."

So, by that form divine, was giv'n to me
Sweet medicine to clear and strengthen sight,
And, as one handling skillfully the harp,
Attendant on some skilful songster's voice
Bids the chords vibrate, and therein the song
Acquires more pleasure; so, the whilst it spake,
It doth remember me, that I beheld
The pair of blessed luminaries move.

Like the accordant twinkling of two eyes,
Their beamy circlets, dancing to the sounds.

CANTO XXI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Again mine eyes were fix'd on Beatrice,
And with mine eyes my soul, that in her looks
Found all contentment. Yet no smile she wore
And, "Did I smile," quoth she, "thou wouldst be straight
Like Semele when into ashes turn'd:
For, mounting these eternal palace-stairs,
My beauty, which the loftier it climbs,
As thou hast noted, still doth kindle more,
So shines, that, were no temp'ring interpos'd,
Thy mortal puissance would from its rays
Shrink, as the leaf doth from the thunderbolt.

Into the seventh splendour are we wafted,
That underneath the burning lion's breast
Beams, in this hour, commingled with his might,
Thy mind be with thine eyes: and in them mirror'd
The shape, which in this mirror shall be shown."
Whoso can deem, how fondly I had fed
My sight upon her blissful countenance,
May know, when to new thoughts I chang'd, what joy
To do the bidding of my heav'nly guide:
In equal balance poising either weight.

Within the crystal, which records the name,
(As its remoter circle girds the world)
Of that lov'd monarch, in whose happy reign
No ill had power to harm, I saw rear'd up,
In colour like to sun-illumin'd gold.

A ladder, which my ken pursued in vain,
So lofty was the summit; down whose steps
I saw the splendours in such multitude
Descending, ev'ry light in heav'n, methought,
Was shed thence. As the rooks, at dawn of day
Bestirring them to dry their feathers chill,
Some speed their way a-field, and homeward some,
Returning, cross their flight, while some abide
And wheel around their airy lodge; so seem'd
That glitterance, wafted on alternate wing,
As upon certain stair it met, and clash'd
Its shining. And one ling'ring near us, wax'd
So bright, that in my thought: said: "The love,
Which this betokens me, admits no doubt."

Unwillingly from question I refrain,
To her, by whom my silence and my speech
Are order'd, looking for a sign: whence she,
Who in the sight of Him, that seeth all,
Saw wherefore I was silent, prompted me
T' indulge the fervent wish; and I began:
"I am not worthy, of my own desert,
That thou shouldst answer me; but for her sake,
Who hath vouchsaf'd my asking, spirit blest!
That in thy joy art shrouded! say the cause,
Which bringeth thee so near: and wherefore, say,
Doth the sweet symphony of Paradise
Keep silence here, pervading with such sounds
Of rapt devotion ev'ry lower sphere?"
"Mortal art thou in hearing as in sight;"
Was the reply: "and what forbade the smile
Of Beatrice interrupts our song.
Only to yield thee gladness of my voice,
And of the light that vests me, I thus far
Descend these hallow'd steps: not that more love
Invites me; for lo! there aloft, as much
Or more of love is witness'd in those flames:
But such my lot by charity assign'd,
That makes us ready servants, as thou seest,
To execute the counsel of the Highest.
"That in this court," said I, "O sacred lamp!
Love no compulsion needs, but follows free
Th' eternal Providence, I well discern:
This harder find to deem, why of thy peers
Thou only to this office wert foredoom'd."
I had not ended, when, like rapid mill,
Upon its centre whirl'd the light; and then
The love, that did inhabit there, replied:
"Splendour eternal, piercing through these folds,
Its virtue to my vision knits, and thus
Supported, lifts me so above myself,
That on the sov'ran essence, which it wells from,
I have the power to gaze: and hence the joy,
Wherewith I sparkle, equaling with my blaze

The keenness of my sight. But not the soul,
That is in heav'n most lustrous, nor the seraph
That hath his eyes most fix'd on God, shall solve
What thou hast ask'd: for in th' abyss it lies
Of th' everlasting statute sunk so low,
That no created ken may fathom it.
And, to the mortal world when thou return'st,
Be this reported; that none henceforth dare
Direct his footsteps to so dread a bourn.
The mind, that here is radiant, on the earth
Is wrapt in mist. Look then if she may do,
Below, what passeth her ability,
When she is ta'en to heav'n." By words like these
Admonish'd, I the question urg'd no more;
And of the spirit humbly sued alone
T' instruct me of its state. "'Twixt either shore
Of Italy, nor distant from thy land,
A stony ridge ariseth, in such sort,
The thunder doth not lift his voice so high,
They call it Catria: at whose foot a cell
Is sacred to the lonely Eremite,
For worship set apart and holy rites."
A third time thus it spake; then added: "There
So firmly to God's service I adher'd,
That with no costlier viands than the juice
Of olives, easily I pass'd the heats
Of summer and the winter frosts, content
In heav'n-ward musings. Rich were the returns
And fertile, which that cloister once was us'd
To render to these heavens: now 't is fall'n
Into a waste so empty, that ere long
Detection must lay bare its vanity
Pietro Damiano there was I yclept:
Pietro the sinner, when before I dwelt
Beside the Adriatic, in the house
Of our blest Lady. Near upon my close
Of mortal life, through much importuning
I was constrain'd to wear the hat that still
From bad to worse it shifted. — Cephas came;

He came, who was the Holy Spirit's vessel,
Barefoot and lean, eating their bread, as chanc'd,
At the first table. Modern Shepherd's need
Those who on either hand may prop and lead them,
So burly are they grown: and from behind
Others to hoist them. Down the palfrey's sides
Spread their broad mantles, so as both the beasts
Are cover'd with one skin. O patience! thou
That lookst on this and doth endure so long."
I at those accents saw the splendours down
From step to step alight, and wheel, and wax,
Each circuiting, more beautiful. Round this
They came, and stay'd them; uttered them a shout
So loud, it hath no likeness here: nor I
Wist what it spake, so deaf'ning was the thunder."

CANTO XXII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Astounded, to the guardian of my steps
I turn'd me, like the chill, who always runs
Thither for succour, where he trusteth most,
And she was like the mother, who her son
Beholding pale and breathless, with her voice
Soothes him, and he is cheer'd; for thus she spake,
Soothing me: "Know'st not thou, thou art in heav'n?
And know'st not thou, whatever is in heav'n,
Is holy, and that nothing there is done
But is done zealously and well? Deem now,
What change in thee the song, and what my smile
had wrought, since thus the shout had pow'r to move thee.
In which couldst thou have understood their prayers,
The vengeance were already known to thee,
Which thou must witness ere thy mortal hour,
The sword of heav'n is not in haste to smite,
Nor yet doth linger, save unto his seeming,
Who in desire or fear doth look for it.
But elsewhere now l bid thee turn thy view;
So shalt thou many a famous spirit behold."
Mine eyes directing, as she will'd, I saw
A hundred little spheres, that fairer grew
By interchange of splendour. I remain'd,
As one, who fearful of o'er-much presuming,
Abates in him the keenness of desire,
Nor dares to question, when amid those pearls,
One largest and most lustrous onward drew,
That it might yield contentment to my wish;
And from within it these the sounds I heard.

"If thou, like me, beheldst the charity
That burns amongst us, what thy mind conceives,
Were utter'd. But that, ere the lofty bound
Thou reach, expectance may not weary thee,

I will make answer even to the thought,
Which thou hast such respect of. In old days,
That mountain, at whose side Cassino rests,
Was on its height frequented by a race
Deceived and ill dispos'd: and I it was,
Who thither carried first the name of Him,
Who brought the soul-subliming truth to man.
And such a speeding grace shone over me,
That from their impious worship I reclaim'd
The dwellers round about, who with the world
Were in delusion lost. These other flames,
The spirits of men contemplative, were all
Enliven'd by that warmth, whose kindly force
Gives birth to flowers and fruits of holiness.
Here is Macarius; Romoaldo here:
And here my brethren, who their steps refrain'd
Within the cloisters, and held firm their heart."

I answ'ring, thus; "Thy gentle words and kind,
And this the cheerful semblance, I behold
Not unobservant, beaming in ye all,
Have rais'd assurance in me, wakening it
Full-blossom'd in my bosom, as a rose
Before the sun, when the consummate flower
Has spread to utmost amplitude. Of thee
Therefore entreat I, father! to declare
If I may gain such favour, as to gaze
Upon thine image, by no covering veil'd."

"Brother!" he thus rejoin'd, "in the last sphere
Expect completion of thy lofty aim,
For there on each desire completion waits,
And there on mine: where every aim is found
Perfect, entire, and for fulfillment ripe.
There all things are as they have ever been:
For space is none to bound, nor pole divides,
Our ladder reaches even to that clime,
And so at giddy distance mocks thy view.
Thither the Patriarch Jacob saw it stretch

Its topmost round, when it appear'd to him
With angels laden. But to mount it now
None lifts his foot from earth: and hence my rule
Is left a profitless stain upon the leaves;
The walls, for abbey rear'd, turned into dens,
The cowls to sacks choak'd up with musty meal.
Foul usury doth not more lift itself
Against God's pleasure, than that fruit which makes
The hearts of monks so wanton: for whate'er
Is in the church's keeping, all pertains.
To such, as sue for heav'n's sweet sake, and not
To those who in respect of kindred claim,
Or on more vile allowance. Mortal flesh
Is grown so dainty, good beginnings last not
From the oak's birth, unto the acorn's setting.
His convent Peter founded without gold
Or silver; I with pray'rs and fasting mine;
And Francis his in meek humility.
And if thou note the point, whence each proceeds,
Then look what it hath err'd to, thou shalt find
The white grown murky. Jordan was turn'd back;
And a less wonder, then the refluent sea,
May at God's pleasure work amendment here."

So saying, to his assembly back he drew:
And they together cluster'd into one,
Then all roll'd upward like an eddying wind.

The sweet dame beckon'd me to follow them:
And, by that influence only, so prevail'd
Over my nature, that no natural motion,
Ascending or descending here below,
Had, as I mounted, with my pennon vied.

So, reader, as my hope is to return
Unto the holy triumph, for the which
I ofttimes wail my sins, and smite my breast,
Thou hadst been longer drawing out and thrusting
Thy finger in the fire, than I was, ere

The sign, that followeth Taurus, I beheld,
And enter'd its precinct. O glorious stars!
O light impregnate with exceeding virtue!
To whom whate'er of genius lifteth me
Above the vulgar, grateful I refer;
With ye the parent of all mortal life
Arose and set, when I did first inhale
The Tuscan air; and afterward, when grace
Vouchsaf'd me entrance to the lofty wheel
That in its orb impels ye, fate decreed
My passage at your clime. To you my soul
Devoutly sighs, for virtue even now
To meet the hard emprize that draws me on.

"Thou art so near the sum of blessedness,"
Said Beatrice, "that behooves thy ken
Be vigilant and clear. And, to this end,
Or even thou advance thee further, hence
Look downward, and contemplate, what a world
Already stretched under our feet there lies:
So as thy heart may, in its blithest mood,
Present itself to the triumphal throng,
Which through the' etherial concave comes rejoicing."

I straight obey'd; and with mine eye return'd
Through all the seven spheres, and saw this globe
So pitiful of semblance, that perforce
It moved my smiles: and him in truth I hold
For wisest, who esteems it least: whose thoughts
Elsewhere are fix'd, him worthiest call and best.
I saw the daughter of Latona shine
Without the shadow, whereof late I deem'd
That dense and rare were cause. Here I sustain'd
The visage, Hyperion! of thy sun;
And mark'd, how near him with their circle, round
Move Maia and Dione; here discern'd
Jove's tempering 'twixt his sire and son; and hence
Their changes and their various aspects
Distinctly scann'd. Nor might I not descry

Of all the seven, how bulky each, how swift;
Nor of their several distances not learn.
This petty area (o’er the which we stride
So fiercely), as along the eternal twins
I wound my way, appear’d before me all,
Forth from the havens stretch’d unto the hills.
Then to the beauteous eyes mine eyes return’d.

CANTO XXIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

E'en as the bird, who midst the leafy bower
Has, in her nest, sat darkling through the night,
With her sweet brood, impatient to descry
Their wished looks, and to bring home their food,
In the fond quest unconscious of her toil:
She, of the time prevenient, on the spray,
That overhangs their couch, with wakeful gaze
Expects the sun; nor ever, till the dawn,
Removeth from the east her eager ken;
So stood the dame erect, and bent her glance
Wistfully on that region, where the sun
Abateth most his speed; that, seeing her
Suspense and wand'ring, I became as one,
In whom desire is waken'd, and the hope
Of somewhat new to come fills with delight.

Short space ensued; I was not held, I say,
Long in expectance, when I saw the heav'n
Wax more and more resplendent; and, "Behold,"
Cried Beatrice, "the triumphal hosts
Of Christ, and all the harvest reap'd at length
Of thy ascending up these spheres." Meseem'd,
That, while she spake her image all did burn,
And in her eyes such fullness was of joy,
And I am fain to pass unconstrued by.

As in the calm full moon, when Trivia smiles,
In peerless beauty, 'mid th' eternal nympus,
That paint through all its gulfs the blue profound
In bright pre-eminence so saw I there,
O'er million lamps a sun, from whom all drew
Their radiance as from ours the starry train:
And through the living light so lustrous glow'd
The substance, that my ken endur'd it not.

O Beatrice! sweet and precious guide!
Who cheer'd me with her comfortable words!
"Against the virtue, that o'erpow'reth thee,
Avails not to resist. Here is the might,
And here the wisdom, which did open lay
The path, that had been yearned for so long,
Betwixt the heav'n and earth." Like to the fire,
That, in a cloud imprison'd doth break out
Expansive, so that from its womb enlarg'd,
It falleth against nature to the ground;
Thus in that heav'nly banqueting my soul
Outgrew herself; and, in the transport lost.
Holds now remembrance none of what she was.

"Ope thou thine eyes, and mark me: thou hast seen
Things, that empower thee to sustain my smile."

I was as one, when a forgotten dream
Doth come across him, and he strives in vain
To shape it in his fantasy again,
Whenas that gracious boon was proffer'd me,
Which never may be cancel'd from the book,
Wherein the past is written. Now were all
Those tongues to sound, that have on sweetest milk
Of Polyhymnia and her sisters fed
And fatten'd, not with all their help to boot,
Unto the thousandth parcel of the truth,
My song might shadow forth that saintly smile,
flow merely in her saintly looks it wrought.
And with such figuring of Paradise
The sacred strain must leap, like one, that meets
A sudden interruption to his road.
But he, who thinks how ponderous the theme,
And that 't is lain upon a mortal shoulder,
May pardon, if it tremble with the burden.
The track, our ventrous keel must furrow, brooks
No unribb'd pinnace, no self-sparing pilot.

”Why doth my face,” said Beatrice, “thus
Enamour thee, as that thou dost not turn
Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming
Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the rose,
Wherein the word divine was made incarnate;
And here the lilies, by whose odour known
The way of life was follow’d.” Prompt I heard
Her bidding, and encounter once again
The strife of aching vision. As erewhile,
Through glance of sunlight, stream’d through broken cloud,
Mine eyes a flower-besprinkled mead have seen,
Though veil’d themselves in shade; so saw I there
Legions of splendours, on whom burning rays
Shed lightnings from above, yet saw I not
The fountain whence they flow’d. O gracious virtue!
Thou, whose broad stamp is on them, higher up
Thou didst exalt thy glory to give room
To my o’erlabour’d sight: when at the name
Of that fair flower, whom duly I invoke
Both morn and eve, my soul, with all her might
Collected, on the goodliest ardour fix’d.
And, as the bright dimensions of the star
In heav’n excelling, as once here on earth
Were, in my eyeballs lively portray’d,
Lo! from within the sky a cresset fell,
Circling in fashion of a diadem,
And girt the star, and hov’ring round it wheel’d.

Whatever melody sounds sweetest here,
And draws the spirit most unto itself,
Might seem a rent cloud when it grates the thunder,
Compar’d unto the sounding of that lyre,
Wherewith the goodliest sapphire, that inlays
The floor of heav’n, was crown’d. “Angelic Love,
I am, who thus with hov’ring flight enwheel
The lofty rapture from that womb inspir’d,
Where our desire did dwell: and round thee so,
Lady of Heav’n! will hover; long as thou

Thy Son shalt follow, and diviner joy
Shall from thy presence gild the highest sphere."

Such close was to the circling melody:
And, as it ended, all the other lights
Took up the strain, and echoed Mary's name.

The robe, that with its regal folds enwraps
The world, and with the nearer breath of God
Doth burn and quiver, held so far retir'd
Its inner hem and skirting over us,
That yet no glimmer of its majesty
Had stream'd unto me: therefore were mine eyes
Unequal to pursue the crowned flame,
That rose and sought its natal seed of fire;
And like to babe, that stretches forth its arms
For very eagerness towards the breast,
After the milk is taken; so outstretch'd
Their wavy summits all the fervent band,
Through zealous love to Mary: then in view
There halted, and "Regina Coeli" sang
So sweetly, the delight hath left me never.

O what o'erflowing plenty is up-pil'd
In those rich-laden coffers, which below
Sow'd the good seed, whose harvest now they keep.

Here are the treasures tasted, that with tears
Were in the Babylonian exile won,
When gold had fail'd them. Here in synod high
Of ancient council with the new conven'd,
Under the Son of Mary and of God,
Victorious he his mighty triumph holds,
To whom the keys of glory were assign'd.

CANTO XXIV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"O ye! in chosen fellowship advanc'd
To the great supper of the blessed Lamb,
Whereon who feeds hath every wish fulfill'd!
If to this man through God's grace be vouchsaf'd
Foretaste of that, which from your table falls,
Or ever death his fated term prescribe;
Be ye not heedless of his urgent will;
But may some influence of your sacred dews
Sprinkle him. Of the fount ye alway drink,
Whence flows what most he craves." Beatrice spake,
And the rejoicing spirits, like to spheres
On firm-set poles revolving, trail'd a blaze
Of comet splendour; and as wheels, that wind
Their circles in the horologe, so work
The stated rounds, that to th' observant eye
The first seems still, and, as it flew, the last;
E'en thus their carols weaving variously,
They by the measure pac'd, or swift, or slow,
Made me to rate the riches of their joy.

From that, which I did note in beauty most
Excelling, saw I issue forth a flame
So bright, as none was left more goodly there.
Round Beatrice thrice it wheel'd about,
With so divine a song, that fancy's ear
Records it not; and the pen passeth on
And leaves a blank: for that our mortal speech,
Nor e'en the inward shaping of the brain,
Hath colours fine enough to trace such folds.

"O saintly sister mine! thy prayer devout
Is with so vehement affection urg'd,
Thou dost unbind me from that beauteous sphere."

Such were the accents towards my lady breath'd
From that blest ardour, soon as it was stay'd:
To whom she thus: "O everlasting light
Of him, within whose mighty grasp our Lord
Did leave the keys, which of this wondrous bliss
He bare below! tent this man, as thou wilt,
With lighter probe or deep, touching the faith,
By the which thou didst on the billows walk.
If he in love, in hope, and in belief,
Be steadfast, is not hid from thee: for thou
Hast there thy ken, where all things are beheld
In liveliest portraiture. But since true faith
Has peopled this fair realm with citizens,
Meet is, that to exalt its glory more,
Thou in his audience shouldst thereof discourse."

Like to the bachelor, who arms himself,
And speaks not, till the master have propos'd
The question, to approve, and not to end it;
So I, in silence, arm'd me, while she spake,
Summoning up each argument to aid;
As was behooveful for such questioner,
And such profession: "As good Christian ought,
Declare thee, What is faith?" Whereat I rais'd
My forehead to the light, whence this had breath'd,
Then turn'd to Beatrice, and in her looks
Approval met, that from their inmost fount
I should unlock the waters. "May the grace,
That giveth me the captain of the church
For confessor," said I, "vouchsafe to me
Apt utterance for my thoughts!" then added: "Sire!
E'en as set down by the unerring style
Of thy dear brother, who with thee conspir'd
To bring Rome in unto the way of life,
Faith of things hop'd is substance, and the proof
Of things not seen; and herein doth consist
Methinks its essence,"— "Rightly hast thou deem'd,"
Was answer'd: "if thou well discern, why first
He hath defin'd it, substance, and then proof."

”The deep things,” I replied, “which here I scan
Distinctly, are below from mortal eye
So hidden, they have in belief alone
Their being, on which credence hope sublime
Is built; and therefore substance it intends.
And inasmuch as we must needs infer
From such belief our reasoning, all respect
To other view excluded, hence of proof
Th’ intention is deriv’d.” Forthwith I heard:
“If thus, whate’er by learning men attain,
Were understood, the sophist would want room
To exercise his wit.” So breath’d the flame
Of love: then added: “Current is the coin
Thou utter’st, both in weight and in alloy.
But tell me, if thou hast it in thy purse.”

”Even so glittering and so round,” said I,
“I not a whit misdoubt of its assay.”

Next issued from the deep imbosom’d splendour:
“Say, whence the costly jewel, on the which
Is founded every virtue, came to thee.”
“The flood,” I answer’d, “from the Spirit of God
Rain’d down upon the ancient bond and new, —
Here is the reas’ning, that convinceth me
So feelingly, each argument beside
Seems blunt and forceless in comparison.”
Then heard I: “Wherefore holdest thou that each,
The elder proposition and the new,
Which so persuade thee, are the voice of heav’n?”

”The works, that follow’d, evidence their truth;”
I answer’d: “Nature did not make for these
The iron hot, or on her anvil mould them.”
“Who voucheth to thee of the works themselves,”
Was the reply, “that they in very deed
Are that they purport? None hath sworn so to thee.”

”That all the world,” said I, “should have been turn’d
To Christian, and no miracle been wrought,
Would in itself be such a miracle,
The rest were not an hundredth part so great.
E’en thou wentst forth in poverty and hunger
To set the goodly plant, that from the vine,
It once was, now is grown unsightly bramble.”
That ended, through the high celestial court
Resounded all the spheres. ”Praise we one God!”
In song of most unearthly melody.
And when that Worthy thus, from branch to branch,
Examining, had led me, that we now
Approach’d the topmost bough, he straight resum’d;
“The grace, that holds sweet dalliance with thy soul,
So far discreetly hath thy lips unclos’d
That, whatsoe’er has past them, I commend.
Behooves thee to express, what thou believ’st,
The next, and whereon thy belief hath grown.”

”O saintly sire and spirit!” I began,
“Who seest that, which thou didst so believe,
As to outstrip feet younger than thine own,
Toward the sepulchre? thy will is here,
That I the tenour of my creed unfold;
And thou the cause of it hast likewise ask’d.
And I reply: I in one God believe,
One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love
All heav’n is mov’d, himself unmov’d the while.
Nor demonstration physical alone,
Or more intelligential and abstruse,
Persuades me to this faith; but from that truth
It cometh to me rather, which is shed
Through Moses, the rapt Prophets, and the Psalms.
The Gospel, and that ye yourselves did write,
When ye were gifted of the Holy Ghost.
In three eternal Persons I believe,
Essence threefold and one, mysterious league
Of union absolute, which, many a time,
The word of gospel lore upon my mind

Imprints: and from this germ, this firstling spark,
The lively flame dilates, and like heav'n's star
Doth glitter in me." As the master hears,
Well pleas'd, and then enfoldeth in his arms
The servant, who hath joyful tidings brought,
And having told the errand keeps his peace;
Thus benediction uttering with song
Soon as my peace I held, compass'd me thrice
The apostolic radiance, whose behest
Had op'd lips; so well their answer pleas'd.

CANTO XXV

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

If e'er the sacred poem that hath made
Both heav'n and earth copartners in its toil,
And with lean abstinence, through many a year,
Faded my brow, be destin'd to prevail
Over the cruelty, which bars me forth
Of the fair sheep-fold, where a sleeping lamb
The wolves set on and fain had worried me,
With other voice and fleece of other grain
I shall forthwith return, and, standing up
At my baptismal font, shall claim the wreath
Due to the poet's temples: for I there
First enter'd on the faith which maketh souls
Acceptable to God: and, for its sake,
Peter had then circled my forehead thus.

Next from the squadron, whence had issued forth
The first fruit of Christ's vicars on the earth,
Toward us mov'd a light, at view whereof
My Lady, full of gladness, spake to me:
"Lo! lo! behold the peer of mickle might,
That makes Falicia throng'd with visitants!"

As when the ring-dove by his mate alights,
In circles each about the other wheels,
And murmuring cooes his fondness; thus saw I
One, of the other great and glorious prince,
With kindly greeting hail'd, extolling both
Their heavenly banqueting; but when an end
Was to their gratulation, silent, each,
Before me sat they down, so burning bright,
I could not look upon them. Smiling then,
Beatrice spake: "O life in glory shrin'd!"
Who didst the largess of our kingly court
Set down with faithful pen! let now thy voice
Of hope the praises in this height resound.

For thou, who figur’st them in shapes, as clear,
As Jesus stood before thee, well can’st speak them.”

”Lift up thy head, and be thou strong in trust:
For that, which hither from the mortal world
Arriveth, must be ripen’d in our beam.”

Such cheering accents from the second flame
Assur’d me; and mine eyes I lifted up
Unto the mountains that had bow’d them late
With over-heavy burden. ”Sith our Liege
Wills of his grace that thou, or ere thy death,
In the most secret council, with his lords
Shouldst be confronted, so that having view’d
The glories of our court, thou mayst therewith
Thyself, and all who hear, invigorate
With hope, that leads to blissful end; declare,
What is that hope, how it doth flourish in thee,
And whence thou hadst it?” Thus proceeding still,
The second light: and she, whose gentle love
My soaring pennons in that lofty flight
Escorted, thus preventing me, rejoin’d:
Among her sons, not one more full of hope,
Hath the church militant: so ‘t is of him
Recorded in the sun, whose liberal orb
Enlighteneth all our tribe: and ere his term
Of warfare, hence permitted he is come,
From Egypt to Jerusalem, to see.
The other points, both which thou hast inquir’d,
Not for more knowledge, but that he may tell
How dear thou holdst the virtue, these to him
Leave I; for he may answer thee with ease,
And without boasting, so God give him grace.”
Like to the scholar, practis’d in his task,
Who, willing to give proof of diligence,
Seconds his teacher gladly, “Hope,” said I,
“Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,
Th’ effect of grace divine and merit preceding.
This light from many a star visits my heart,

But flow'd to me the first from him, who sang
The songs of the Supreme, himself supreme
Among his tuneful brethren. 'Let all hope
In thee,' so speak his anthem, 'who have known
Thy name;' and with my faith who know not that?
From thee, the next, distilling from his spring,
In thine epistle, fell on me the drops
So plenteously, that I on others shower
The influence of their dew." Whileas I spake,
A lamping, as of quick and vollied lightning,
Within the bosom of that mighty sheen,
Play'd tremulous; then forth these accents breath'd:
"Love for the virtue which attended me
E'en to the palm, and issuing from the field,
Glows vigorous yet within me, and inspires
To ask of thee, whom also it delights;
What promise thou from hope in chief dost win."

"Both scriptures, new and ancient," I reply'd;
"Propose the mark (which even now I view)
For souls belov'd of God. Isaias saith,

'That, in their own land, each one must be clad
In twofold vesture; and their proper lands this delicious life.'
In terms more full,
And clearer far, thy brother hath set forth
This revelation to us, where he tells
Of the white raiment destin'd to the saints."
And, as the words were ending, from above,
"They hope in thee," first heard we cried: whereto
Answer'd the carols all. Amidst them next,
A light of so clear amplitude emerg'd,
That winter's month were but a single day,
Were such a crystal in the Cancer's sign.

Like as a virgin riseth up, and goes,
And enters on the mazes of the dance,
Though gay, yet innocent of worse intent,
Than to do fitting honour to the bride;

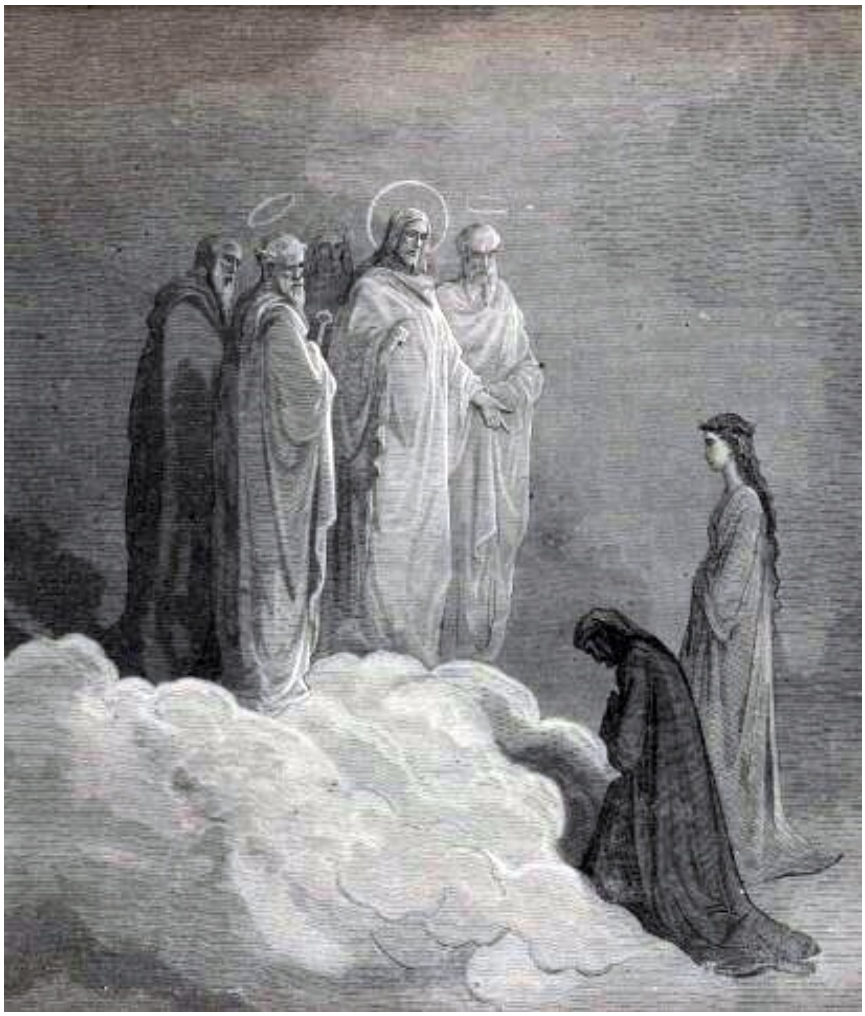
So I beheld the new effulgence come
Unto the other two, who in a ring
Wheel'd, as became their rapture. In the dance
And in the song it mingled. And the dame
Held on them fix'd her looks: e'en as the spouse
Silent and moveless. "This is he, who lay
Upon the bosom of our pelican:
This he, into whose keeping from the cross
The mighty charge was given." Thus she spake,
Yet therefore naught the more remov'd her Sight
From marking them, or ere her words began,
Or when they clos'd. As he, who looks intent,
And strives with searching ken, how he may see
The sun in his eclipse, and, through desire
Of seeing, loseth power of sight: so I
Peer'd on that last resplendence, while I heard:
"Why dazzlest thou thine eyes in seeking that,
Which here abides not? Earth my body is,
In earth: and shall be, with the rest, so long,
As till our number equal the decree
Of the Most High. The two that have ascended,
In this our blessed cloister, shine alone
With the two garments. So report below."

As when, for ease of labour, or to shun
Suspected peril at a whistle's breath,
The oars, erewhile dash'd frequent in the wave,
All rest; the flamy circle at that voice
So rested, and the mingling sound was still,
Which from the trinal band soft-breathing rose.
I turn'd, but ah! how trembled in my thought,
When, looking at my side again to see
Beatrice, I descried her not, although
Not distant, on the happy coast she stood.

CANTO XXVI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

With dazzled eyes, whilst wond'ring I remain'd,
Forth of the beamy flame which dazzled me,
Issued a breath, that in attention mute
Detain'd me; and these words it spake: "'T were well,
That, long as till thy vision, on my form
O'erspent, regain its virtue, with discourse
Thou compensate the brief delay. Say then,
Beginning, to what point thy soul aspires:"



"And meanwhile rest assur'd, that sight in thee
Is but o'erpowered a space, not wholly quench'd:

Since thy fair guide and lovely, in her look
Hath potency, the like to that which dwelt
In Ananias' hand.'' I answering thus:
"Be to mine eyes the remedy or late
Or early, at her pleasure; for they were
The gates, at which she enter'd, and did light
Her never dying fire. My wishes here
Are centered; in this palace is the weal,
That Alpha and Omega, is to all
The lessons love can read me." Yet again
The voice which had dispers'd my fear, when daz'd
With that excess, to converse urg'd, and spake:
"Behooves thee sift more narrowly thy terms,
And say, who level'd at this scope thy bow."

"Philosophy," said I, ''hath arguments,
And this place hath authority enough
'T' imprint in me such love: for, of constraint,
Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,
Kindles our love, and in degree the more,
As it comprises more of goodness in 't.
The essence then, where such advantage is,
That each good, found without it, is naught else
But of his light the beam, must needs attract
The soul of each one, loving, who the truth
Discerns, on which this proof is built. Such truth
Learn I from him, who shows me the first love
Of all intelligential substances
Eternal: from his voice I learn, whose word
Is truth, that of himself to Moses saith,
'I will make all my good before thee pass.'
Lastly from thee I learn, who chief proclaim'st,
E'en at the outset of thy heralding,
In mortal ears the mystery of heav'n."

"Through human wisdom, and th' authority
Therewith agreeing," heard I answer'd, "keep
The choicest of thy love for God. But say,
If thou yet other cords within thee feel'st

That draw thee towards him; so that thou report
How many are the fangs, with which this love
Is grappled to thy soul." I did not miss,
To what intent the eagle of our Lord
Had pointed his demand; yea noted well
Th' avowal, which he led to; and resum'd:
"All grappling bonds, that knit the heart to God,
Confederate to make fast our clarity.
The being of the world, and mine own being,
The death which he endur'd that I should live,
And that, which all the faithful hope, as I do,
To the foremention'd lively knowledge join'd,
Have from the sea of ill love sav'd my bark,
And on the coast secur'd it of the right.
As for the leaves, that in the garden bloom,
My love for them is great, as is the good
Dealt by th' eternal hand, that tends them all."

I ended, and therewith a song most sweet
Rang through the spheres; and "Holy, holy, holy,"
Accordant with the rest my lady sang.
And as a sleep is broken and dispers'd
Through sharp encounter of the nimble light,
With the eye's spirit running forth to meet
The ray, from membrane on to the membrane urg'd;
And the upstartled wight loathes that he sees;
So, at his sudden waking, he misdeems
Of all around him, till assurance waits
On better judgment: thus the saintly came
Drove from before mine eyes the motes away,
With the resplendence of her own, that cast
Their brightness downward, thousand miles below.
Whence I my vision, clearer shall before,
Recover'd; and, well nigh astounded, ask'd
Of a fourth light, that now with us I saw.

And Beatrice: "The first diving soul,
That ever the first virtue fram'd, admires
Within these rays his Maker." Like the leaf,

That bows its lithe top till the blast is blown;
By its own virtue rear'd then stands aloof;
So I, the whilst she said, awe-stricken bow'd.
Then eagerness to speak embolden'd me;
And I began: "O fruit! that wast alone
Mature, when first engender'd! Ancient father!
That doubly seest in every wedded bride
Thy daughter by affinity and blood!
Devoutly as I may, I pray thee hold
Converse with me: my will thou seest; and I,
More speedily to hear thee, tell it not."

It chanceth oft some animal bewrays,
Through the sleek cov'ring of his furry coat.
The fondness, that stirs in him and conforms
His outside seeming to the cheer within:
And in like guise was Adam's spirit mov'd
To joyous mood, that through the covering shone,
Transparent, when to pleasure me it spake:
"No need thy will be told, which I untold
Better discern, than thou whatever thing
Thou holdst most certain: for that will I see
In Him, who is truth's mirror, and Himself
Parhelion unto all things, and naught else
To him. This wouldst thou hear; how long since God
Plac'd me high garden, from whose hounds
She led me up in this ladder, steep and long;
What space endur'd my season of delight;
Whence truly sprang the wrath that banish'd me;
And what the language, which I spake and fram'd
Not that I tasted of the tree, my son,
Was in itself the cause of that exile,
But only my transgressing of the mark
Assign'd me. There, whence at thy lady's hest
The Mantuan mov'd him, still was I debarr'd
This council, till the sun had made complete,
Four thousand and three hundred rounds and twice,
His annual journey; and, through every light
In his broad pathway, saw I him return,

Thousand save sev'nty times, the whilst I dwelt
Upon the earth. The language I did use
Was worn away, or ever Nimrod's race
Their unaccomplishable work began.
For naught, that man inclines to, ere was lasting,
Left by his reason free, and variable,
As is the sky that sways him. That he speaks,
Is nature's prompting: whether thus or thus,
She leaves to you, as ye do most affect it.
Ere I descended into hell's abyss,
El was the name on earth of the Chief Good,
Whose joy enfolds me: Eli then 't was call'd
And so beseemeth: for, in mortals, use
Is as the leaf upon the bough; that goes,
And other comes instead. Upon the mount
Most high above the waters, all my life,
Both innocent and guilty, did but reach
From the first hour, to that which cometh next
(As the sun changes quarter), to the sixth."

CANTO XXVII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Then "Glory to the Father, to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit," rang aloud
Throughout all Paradise, that with the song
My spirit reel'd, so passing sweet the strain:
And what I saw was equal ecstasy;
One universal smile it seem'd of all things,
Joy past compare, gladness unutterable,
Imperishable life of peace and love,
Exhaustless riches and unmeasur'd bliss.

Before mine eyes stood the four torches lit;
And that, which first had come, began to wax
In brightness, and in semblance such became,
As Jove might be, if he and Mars were birds,
And interchang'd their plumes. Silence ensued,
Through the blest quire, by Him, who here appoints
Vicissitude of ministry, enjoin'd;
When thus I heard: "Wonder not, if my hue
Be chang'd; for, while I speak, these shalt thou see
All in like manner change with me. My place
He who usurps on earth (my place, ay, mine,
Which in the presence of the Son of God
Is void), the same hath made my cemetery
A common sewer of puddle and of blood:
The more below his triumph, who from hence
Malignant fell." Such colour, as the sun,
At eve or morning, paints an adverse cloud,
Then saw I sprinkled over all the sky.
And as th' unblemish'd dame, who in herself
Secure of censure, yet at bare report
Of other's failing, shrinks with maiden fear;
So Beatrice in her semblance chang'd:
And such eclipse in heav'n methinks was seen,
When the Most Holy suffer'd. Then the words
Proceeded, with voice, alter'd from itself
So clean, the semblance did not alter more.
"Not to this end was Christ's spouse with my blood,
With that of Linus, and of Cletus fed:
That she might serve for purchase of base gold:
But for the purchase of this happy life
Did Sextus, Pius, and Callixtus bleed,
And Urban, they, whose doom was not without
Much weeping seal'd. No purpose was of our
That on the right hand of our successors
Part of the Christian people should be set,
And part upon their left; nor that the keys,
Which were vouchsaf'd me, should for ensign serve
Unto the banners, that do levy war
On the baptiz'd: nor I, for sigil-mark

Set upon sold and lying privileges;
Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red.
In shepherd's clothing greedy wolves below
Range wide o'er all the pastures. Arm of God!
Why longer sleepst thou? Caorsines and Gascona
Prepare to quaff our blood. O good beginning
To what a vile conclusion must thou stoop!
But the high providence, which did defend
Through Scipio the world's glory unto Rome,
Will not delay its succour: and thou, son,
Who through thy mortal weight shall yet again
Return below, open thy lips, nor hide
What is by me not hidden." As a Hood
Of frozen vapours streams adown the air,
What time the she-goat with her skiey horn
Touches the sun; so saw I there stream wide
The vapours, who with us had linger'd late
And with glad triumph deck th' ethereal cope.
Onward my sight their semblances pursued;
So far pursued, as till the space between
From its reach sever'd them: whereat the guide
Celestial, marking me no more intent
On upward gazing, said, "Look down and see
What circuit thou hast compass'd." From the hour
When I before had cast my view beneath,
All the first region overpast I saw,
Which from the midmost to the bound'ry winds;
That onward thence from Gades I beheld
The unwise passage of Laertes' son,
And hitherward the shore, where thou, Europa!
Mad'st thee a joyful burden: and yet more
Of this dim spot had seen, but that the sun,
A constellation off and more, had ta'en
His progress in the zodiac underneath.

Then by the spirit, that doth never leave
Its amorous dalliance with my lady's looks,
Back with redoubled ardour were mine eyes
Led unto her: and from her radiant smiles,

Whenas I turn'd me, pleasure so divine
Did lighten on me, that whatever bait
Or art or nature in the human flesh,
Or in its limn'd resemblance, can combine
Through greedy eyes to take the soul withal,
Were to her beauty nothing. Its boon influence
From the fair nest of Leda rapt me forth,
And wafted on into the swiftest heav'n.

What place for entrance Beatrice chose,
I may not say, so uniform was all,
Liveliest and loftiest. She my secret wish
Divin'd; and with such gladness, that God's love
Seem'd from her visage shining, thus began:
"Here is the goal, whence motion on his race
Starts; motionless the centre, and the rest
All mov'd around. Except the soul divine,
Place in this heav'n is none, the soul divine,
Wherein the love, which ruleth o'er its orb,
Is kindled, and the virtue that it sheds;
One circle, light and love, enclasping it,
As this doth clasp the others; and to Him,
Who draws the bound, its limit only known.
Measur'd itself by none, it doth divide
Motion to all, counted unto them forth,
As by the fifth or half ye count forth ten.
The vase, wherein time's roots are plung'd, thou seest,
Look elsewhere for the leaves. O mortal lust!
That canst not lift thy head above the waves
Which whelm and sink thee down! The will in man
Bears goodly blossoms; but its ruddy promise
Is, by the dripping of perpetual rain,
Made mere abortion: faith and innocence
Are met with but in babes, each taking leave
Ere cheeks with down are sprinkled; he, that fasts,
While yet a stammerer, with his tongue let loose
Gluts every food alike in every moon.
One yet a babbler, loves and listens to
His mother; but no sooner hath free use

Of speech, than he doth wish her in her grave.
So suddenly doth the fair child of him,
Whose welcome is the morn and eve his parting,
To negro blackness change her virgin white.

”Thou, to abate thy wonder, note that none
Bears rule in earth, and its frail family
Are therefore wand’rers. Yet before the date,
When through the hundredth in his reck’ning drops
Pale January must be shor’d aside
From winter’s calendar, these heav’nly spheres
Shall roar so loud, that fortune shall be fain
To turn the poop, where she hath now the prow;
So that the fleet run onward; and true fruit,
Expected long, shall crown at last the bloom!”

CANTO XXVIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

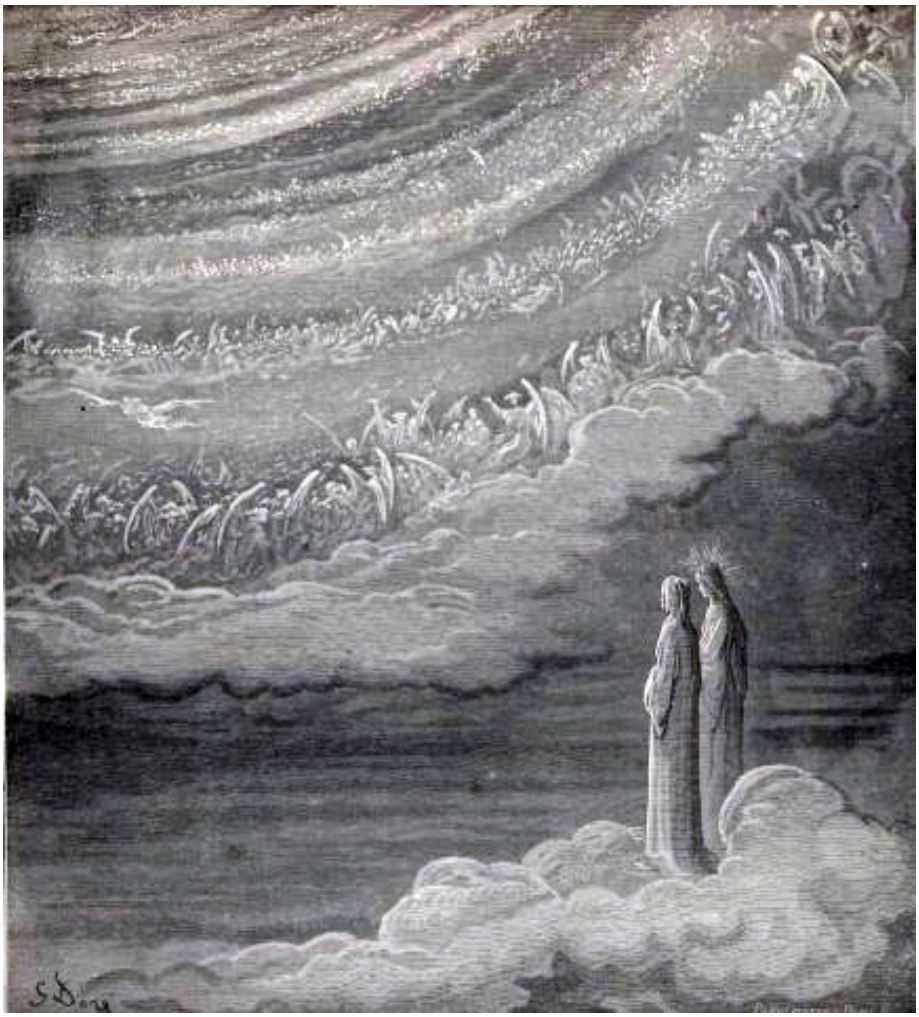
So she who doth imparadise my soul,
Had drawn the veil from off our pleasant life,
And bar'd the truth of poor mortality;
When lo! as one who, in a mirror, spies
The shining of a flambeau at his back,
Lit sudden ore he deem of its approach,
And turneth to resolve him, if the glass
Have told him true, and sees the record faithful
As note is to its metre; even thus,
I well remember, did befall to me,
Looking upon the beauteous eyes, whence love
Had made the leash to take me. As I turn'd;
And that, which, in their circles, none who spies,
Can miss of, in itself apparent, struck
On mine; a point I saw, that darted light
So sharp, no lid, unclosing, may bear up
Against its keenness. The least star we view
From hence, had seem'd a moon, set by its side,
As star by side of star. And so far off,
Perchance, as is the halo from the light
Which paints it, when most dense the vapour spreads,
There wheel'd about the point a circle of fire,
More rapid than the motion, which first girds
The world. Then, circle after circle, round
Enring'd each other; till the seventh reach'd
Circumference so ample, that its bow,
Within the span of Juno's messenger,
lied scarce been held entire. Beyond the sev'nth,
Follow'd yet other two. And every one,
As more in number distant from the first,
Was tardier in motion; and that glow'd
With flame most pure, that to the sparkle' of truth
Was nearest, as partaking most, methinks,
Of its reality. The guide belov'd

Saw me in anxious thought suspense, and spake:
“Heav’n, and all nature, hangs upon that point.
The circle thereto most conjoin’d observe;
And know, that by intenser love its course
Is to this swiftness wing’d.” To whom I thus:
“It were enough; nor should I further seek,
Had I but witness’d order, in the world
Appointed, such as in these wheels is seen.
But in the sensible world such diff’rence is,
That is each round shows more divinity,
As each is wider from the centre. Hence,
If in this wondrous and angelic temple,
That hath for confine only light and love,
My wish may have completion I must know,
Wherefore such disagreement is between
Th’ exemplar and its copy: for myself,
Contemplating, I fail to pierce the cause.”

”It is no marvel, if thy fingers foil’d
Do leave the knot untied: so hard ‘t is grown
For want of tenting.” Thus she said: “But take,”
She added, “if thou wish thy cure, my words,
And entertain them subtly. Every orb
Corporeal, doth proportion its extent
Unto the virtue through its parts diffus’d.
The greater blessedness preserves the more.
The greater is the body (if all parts
Share equally) the more is to preserve.
Therefore the circle, whose swift course enwheels
The universal frame answers to that,
Which is supreme in knowledge and in love
Thus by the virtue, not the seeming, breadth
Of substance, measure, thou shalt see the heav’ns,
Each to the’ intelligence that ruleth it,
Greater to more, and smaller unto less,
Suited in strict and wondrous harmony.”

As when the sturdy north blows from his cheek
A blast, that scours the sky, forthwith our air,

Clear’d of the rack, that hung on it before,
Glitters; and, With his beauties all unveil’d,
The firmament looks forth serene, and smiles;
Such was my cheer, when Beatrice drove
With clear reply the shadows back, and truth
Was manifested, as a star in heaven.
And when the words were ended, not unlike
To iron in the furnace, every cirque
Ebullient shot forth scintillating fires:
And every sparkle shivering to new blaze,
In number did outmillion the account
Reduplicate upon the chequer’d board.
Then heard I echoing on from choir to choir,
“Hosanna,” to the fixed point, that holds,
And shall for ever hold them to their place,
From everlasting, irremovable.



Musing awhile I stood: and she, who saw
by inward meditations, thus began:
“In the first circles, they, whom thou beheldst,
Are seraphim and cherubim. Thus swift
Follow their hoops, in likeness to the point,
Near as they can, approaching; and they can
The more, the loftier their vision. Those,
That round them fleet, gazing the Godhead next,
Are thrones; in whom the first trine ends. And all
Are blessed, even as their sight descends
Deeper into the truth, wherein rest is
For every mind. Thus happiness hath root
In seeing, not in loving, which of sight
Is aftergrowth. And of the seeing such
The meed, as unto each in due degree

Grace and good-will their measure have assign’d.
The other trine, that with still opening buds
In this eternal springtide blossom fair,
Fearless of bruising from the nightly ram,
Breathe up in warbled melodies threefold
Hosannas blending ever, from the three
Transmitted. hierarchy of gods, for aye
Rejoicing, dominations first, next then
Virtues, and powers the third. The next to whom
Are princedoms and archangels, with glad round
To tread their festal ring; and last the band
Angelical, disporting in their sphere.
All, as they circle in their orders, look
Aloft, and downward with such sway prevail,
That all with mutual impulse tend to God.
These once a mortal view beheld. Desire
In Dionysius so intently wrought,
That he, as I have done rang’d them; and nam’d
Their orders, marshal’d in his thought. From him
Dissentient, one refus’d his sacred read.
But soon as in this heav’n his doubting eyes
Were open’d, Gregory at his error smil’d
Nor marvel, that a denizen of earth
Should scan such secret truth; for he had learnt
Both this and much beside of these our orbs,
From an eye-witness to heav’n’s mysteries.”

CANTO XXIX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

No longer than what time Latona's twins
Cover'd of Libra and the fleecy star,
Together both, girding the' horizon hang,
In even balance from the zenith pois'd,
Till from that verge, each, changing hemisphere,
Part the nice level; e'en so brief a space
Did Beatrice's silence hold. A smile
Bat painted on her cheek; and her fix'd gaze
Bent on the point, at which my vision fail'd:
When thus her words resuming she began:
"I speak, nor what thou wouldst inquire demand;
For I have mark'd it, where all time and place
Are present. Not for increase to himself
Of good, which may not be increas'd, but forth
To manifest his glory by its beams,
Inhabiting his own eternity,
Beyond time's limit or what bound soe'er
To circumscribe his being, as he will'd,
Into new natures, like unto himself,
Eternal Love unfolded. Nor before,
As if in dull inaction torpid lay.
For not in process of before or aft
Upon these waters mov'd the Spirit of God.
Simple and mix'd, both form and substance, forth
To perfect being started, like three darts
Shot from a bow three-corded. And as ray
In crystal, glass, and amber, shines entire,
E'en at the moment of its issuing; thus
Did, from th' eternal Sovran, beam entire
His threefold operation, at one act
Produc'd coeval. Yet in order each
Created his due station knew: those highest,
Who pure intelligence were made: mere power
The lowest: in the midst, bound with strict league,

Intelligence and power, unsever'd bond.
Long tract of ages by the angels past,
Ere the creating of another world,
Describ'd on Jerome's pages thou hast seen.
But that what I disclose to thee is true,
Those penmen, whom the Holy Spirit mov'd
In many a passage of their sacred book
Attest; as thou by diligent search shalt find
And reason in some sort discerns the same,
Who scarce would grant the heav'nly ministers
Of their perfection void, so long a space.
Thus when and where these spirits of love were made,
Thou know'st, and how: and knowing hast allay'd
Thy thirst, which from the triple question rose.
Ere one had reckon'd twenty, e'en so soon
Part of the angels fell: and in their fall
Confusion to your elements ensued.
The others kept their station: and this task,
Whereon thou lookst, began with such delight,
That they surcease not ever, day nor night,
Their circling. Of that fatal lapse the cause
Was the curst pride of him, whom thou hast seen
Pent with the world's incumbrance. Those, whom here
Thou seest, were lowly to confess themselves
Of his free bounty, who had made them apt
For ministries so high: therefore their views
Were by enlight'ning grace and their own merit
Exalted; so that in their will confirm'd
They stand, nor feel to fall. For do not doubt,
But to receive the grace, which heav'n vouchsafes,
Is meritorious, even as the soul
With prompt affection welcometh the guest.
Now, without further help, if with good heed
My words thy mind have treasur'd, thou henceforth
This consistory round about mayst scan,
And gaze thy fill. But since thou hast on earth
Heard vain disputers, reasoners in the schools,
Canvas the' angelic nature, and dispute
Its powers of apprehension, memory, choice;

Therefore, ‘t is well thou take from me the truth,
Pure and without disguise, which they below,
Equivocating, darken and perplex.

”Know thou, that, from the first, these substances,
Rejoicing in the countenance of God,
Have held unceasingly their view, intent
Upon the glorious vision, from the which
Naught absent is nor hid: where then no change
Of newness with succession interrupts,
Remembrance there needs none to gather up
Divided thought and images remote

”So that men, thus at variance with the truth
Dream, though their eyes be open; reckless some
Of error; others well aware they err,
To whom more guilt and shame are justly due.
Each the known track of sage philosophy
Deserts, and has a byway of his own:
So much the restless eagerness to shine
And love of singularity prevail.
Yet this, offensive as it is, provokes
Heav’n’s anger less, than when the book of God
Is forc’d to yield to man’s authority,
Or from its straightness warp’d: no reck’ning made
What blood the sowing of it in the world
Has cost; what favour for himself he wins,
Who meekly clings to it. The aim of all
Is how to shine: e’en they, whose office is
To preach the Gospel, let the gospel sleep,
And pass their own inventions off instead.
One tells, how at Christ’s suffering the wan moon
Bent back her steps, and shadow’d o’er the sun
With intervenient disk, as she withdrew:
Another, how the light shrouded itself
Within its tabernacle, and left dark
The Spaniard and the Indian, with the Jew.
Such fables Florence in her pulpit hears,
Bandied about more frequent, than the names

Of Bindi and of Lapi in her streets.
The sheep, meanwhile, poor witless ones, return
From pasture, fed with wind: and what avails
For their excuse, they do not see their harm?
Christ said not to his first conventicle,
‘Go forth and preach impostures to the world,’
But gave them truth to build on; and the sound
Was mighty on their lips; nor needed they,
Beside the gospel, other spear or shield,
To aid them in their warfare for the faith.
The preacher now provides himself with store
Of jests and gibes; and, so there be no lack
Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl
Distends, and he has won the meed he sought:
Could but the vulgar catch a glimpse the while
Of that dark bird which nestles in his hood,
They scarce would wait to hear the blessing said.
Which now the dotards hold in such esteem,
That every counterfeit, who spreads abroad
The hands of holy promise, finds a throng
Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony
Fattens with this his swine, and others worse
Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,
Paying with unstamp’d metal for their fare.

”But (for we far have wander’d) let us seek
The forward path again; so as the way
Be shorten’d with the time. No mortal tongue
Nor thought of man hath ever reach’d so far,
That of these natures he might count the tribes.
What Daniel of their thousands hath reveal’d
With finite number infinite conceals.
The fountain at whose source these drink their beams,
With light supplies them in as many modes,
As there are splendours, that it shines on: each
According to the virtue it conceives,
Differing in love and sweet affection.
Look then how lofty and how huge in breadth
The’ eternal might, which, broken and dispers’d

Over such countless mirrors, yet remains
Whole in itself and one, as at the first.”

CANTO XXX

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Noon's fervid hour perchance six thousand miles
From hence is distant; and the shadowy cone
Almost to level on our earth declines;
When from the midmost of this blue abyss
By turns some star is to our vision lost.
And straightway as the handmaid of the sun
Puts forth her radiant brow, all, light by light,
Fade, and the spangled firmament shuts in,
E'en to the loveliest of the glittering throng.
Thus vanish'd gradually from my sight
The triumph, which plays ever round the point,
That overcame me, seeming (for it did)
Engirt by that it girdeth. Wherefore love,
With loss of other object, forc'd me bend
Mine eyes on Beatrice once again.

If all, that hitherto is told of her,
Were in one praise concluded, 't were too weak
To furnish out this turn. Mine eyes did look
On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth,
Not merely to exceed our human, but,
That save its Maker, none can to the full
Enjoy it. At this point o'erpower'd I fail,
Unequal to my theme, as never bard
Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.
For, as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,
E'en so remembrance of that witching smile
Hath dispossess my spirit of itself.
Not from that day, when on this earth I first
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,
Have I with song applausive ever ceas'd
To follow, but not follow them no more;
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,
When it doth touch the limit of his skill.

She (such as I bequeath her to the bruit
Of louder trump than mine, which hasteneth on,
Urging its arduous matter to the close),
Her words resum'd, in gesture and in voice
Resembling one accustom'd to command:
"Forth from the last corporeal are we come
Into the heav'n, that is unbodied light,
Light intellectual replete with love,
Love of true happiness replete with joy,
Joy, that transcends all sweetness of delight.
Here shalt thou look on either mighty host
Of Paradise; and one in that array,
Which in the final judgment thou shalt see."

As when the lightning, in a sudden spleen
Unfolded, dashes from the blinding eyes
The visive spirits dazzled and bedimm'd;
So, round about me, fulminating streams
Of living radiance play'd, and left me swath'd
And veil'd in dense impenetrable blaze.
Such weal is in the love, that stills this heav'n;
For its own flame the torch this fitting ever!

No sooner to my list'ning ear had come
The brief assurance, than I understood
New virtue into me infus'd, and sight
Kindled afresh, with vigour to sustain
Excess of light, however pure. I look'd;
And in the likeness of a river saw
Light flowing, from whose amber-seeming waves
Flash'd up effulgence, as they glided on
'Twixt banks, on either side, painted with spring,
Incredible how fair; and, from the tide,
There ever and anon, outstarting, flew
Sparkles instinct with life; and in the flow'rs
Did set them, like to rubies chas'd in gold;
Then, as if drunk with odors, plung'd again
Into the wondrous flood; from which, as one
Re'enter'd, still another rose. "The thirst

Of knowledge high, whereby thou art inflam'd,
To search the meaning of what here thou seest,
The more it warms thee, pleases me the more.
But first behooves thee of this water drink,
Or ere that longing be allay'd." So spake
The day-star of mine eyes; then thus subjoin'd:
"This stream, and these, forth issuing from its gulf,
And diving back, a living topaz each,
With all this laughter on its bloomy shores,
Are but a preface, shadowy of the truth
They emblem: not that, in themselves, the things
Are crude; but on thy part is the defect,
For that thy views not yet aspire so high."
Never did babe, that had outslept his wont,
Rush, with such eager straining, to the milk,
As I toward the water, bending me,
To make the better mirrors of mine eyes
In the refining wave; and, as the eaves
Of mine eyelids did drink of it, forthwith
Seem'd it unto me turn'd from length to round,
Then as a troop of maskers, when they put
Their vizors off, look other than before,
The counterfeited semblance thrown aside;
So into greater jubilee were chang'd
Those flowers and sparkles, and distinct I saw
Before me either court of heav'n displac'd.

O prime enlightener! thou who crav'st me strength
On the high triumph of thy realm to gaze!
Grant virtue now to utter what I kenn'd,
There is in heav'n a light, whose goodly shine
Makes the Creator visible to all
Created, that in seeing him alone
Have peace; and in a circle spreads so far,
That the circumference were too loose a zone
To girdle in the sun. All is one beam,
Reflected from the summit of the first,
That moves, which being hence and vigour takes,
And as some cliff, that from the bottom eyes

Its image mirror'd in the crystal flood,
As if 't admire its brave appareling
Of verdure and of flowers: so, round about,
Eyeing the light, on more than million thrones,
Stood, eminent, whatever from our earth
Has to the skies return'd. How wide the leaves
Extended to their utmost of this rose,
Whose lowest step embosoms such a space
Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude
Nor height impeded, but my view with ease
Took in the full dimensions of that joy.
Near or remote, what there avails, where God
Immediate rules, and Nature, awed, suspends
Her sway? Into the yellow of the rose
Perennial, which in bright expansiveness,
Lays forth its gradual blooming, redolent
Of praises to the never-wint'ring sun,
As one, who fain would speak yet holds his peace,
Beatrice led me; and, "Behold," she said,
"This fair assemblage! stoles of snowy white
How numberless! The city, where we dwell,
Behold how vast! and these our seats so throng'd
Few now are wanting here! In that proud stall,
On which, the crown, already o'er its state
Suspended, holds thine eyes — or ere thyself
Mayst at the wedding sup, — shall rest the soul
Of the great Harry, he who, by the world
Augustas hail'd, to Italy must come,
Before her day be ripe. But ye are sick,
And in your tetchy wantonness as blind,
As is the bantling, that of hunger dies,
And drives away the nurse. Nor may it be,
That he, who in the sacred forum sways,
Openly or in secret, shall with him
Accordant walk: Whom God will not endure
I' th' holy office long; but thrust him down
To Simon Magus, where Magna's priest
Will sink beneath him: such will be his meed."

CANTO XXXI

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

In fashion, as a snow-white rose, lay then
Before my view the saintly multitude,
Which in his own blood Christ espous'd. Meanwhile
That other host, that soar aloft to gaze
And celebrate his glory, whom they love,
Hover'd around; and, like a troop of bees,
Amid the vernal sweets alighting now,
Now, clustering, where their fragrant labour glows,
Flew downward to the mighty flow'r, or rose
From the redundant petals, streaming back
Unto the steadfast dwelling of their joy.

Faces had they of flame, and wings of gold;
The rest was whiter than the driven snow.
And as they flitted down into the flower,
From range to range, fanning their plumy loins,
Whisper'd the peace and ardour, which they won
From that soft winnowing. Shadow none, the vast
Interposition of such numerous flight
Cast, from above, upon the flower, or view
Obstructed aught. For, through the universe,
Wherever merited, celestial light
Glides freely, and no obstacle prevents.

All there, who reign in safety and in bliss,
Ages long past or new, on one sole mark
Their love and vision fix'd. O trinal beam
Of individual star, that charmst them thus,
Vouchsafe one glance to gild our storm below!

If the grim brood, from Arctic shores that roam'd,
(Where helice, forever, as she wheels,
Sparkles a mother's fondness on her son)
Stood in mute wonder 'mid the works of Rome,
When to their view the Lateran arose
In greatness more than earthly; I, who then
From human to divine had past, from time
Unto eternity, and out of Florence
To justice and to truth, how might I choose
But marvel too? 'Twixt gladness and amaze,
In sooth no will had I to utter aught,
Or hear. And, as a pilgrim, when he rests
Within the temple of his vow, looks round
In breathless awe, and hopes some time to tell
Of all its goodly state: e'en so mine eyes
Cours'd up and down along the living light,
Now low, and now aloft, and now around,
Visiting every step. Looks I beheld,
Where charity in soft persuasion sat,
Smiles from within and radiance from above,
And in each gesture grace and honour high.

So rov'd my ken, and its general form
All Paradise survey'd: when round I turn'd
With purpose of my lady to inquire
Once more of things, that held my thought suspense,
But answer found from other than I ween'd;
For, Beatrice, when I thought to see,
I saw instead a senior, at my side,
Rob'd, as the rest, in glory. Joy benign
Glow'd in his eye, and o'er his cheek diffus'd,
With gestures such as spake a father's love.
And, "Whither is she vanish'd?" straight I ask'd.

"By Beatrice summon'd," he replied,
"I come to aid thy wish. Looking aloft
To the third circle from the highest, there
Behold her on the throne, wherein her merit
Hath plac'd her." Answering not, mine eyes I rais'd,
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams.
Not from the centre of the sea so far
Unto the region of the highest thunder,
As was my ken from hers; and yet the form
Came through that medium down, unmix'd and pure,

”O Lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest!
Who, for my safety, hast not scorn’d, in hell
To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark’d!
For all mine eyes have seen, I, to thy power
And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave,
Thou hast to freedom brought me; and no means,
For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.
Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep.
That, when my spirit, which thou madest whole,
Is loosen’d from this body, it may find
Favour with thee.” So I my suit preferr’d:
And she, so distant, as appear’d, look’d down,
And smil’d; then tow’rds th’ eternal fountain turn’d.

And thus the senior, holy and rever'd:
"That thou at length mayst happily conclude
Thy voyage (to which end I was dispatch'd,
By supplication mov'd and holy love)
Let thy upsoaring vision range, at large,
This garden through: for so, by ray divine
Kindled, thy ken a higher flight shall mount;
And from heav'n's queen, whom fervent I adore,
All gracious aid befriend us; for that I
Am her own faithful Bernard." Like a wight,
Who haply from Croatia wends to see
Our Veronica, and the while 't is shown,
Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,
And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith
Unto himself in thought: "And didst thou look
E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God?
And was this semblance thine?" So gaz'd I then
Adoring; for the charity of him,
Who musing, in the world that peace enjoy'd,
Stood lively before me. "Child of grace!"
Thus he began: "thou shalt not knowledge gain
Of this glad being, if thine eyes are held
Still in this depth below. But search around
The circles, to the furthest, till thou spy
Seated in state, the queen, that of this realm
Is sovran." Straight mine eyes I rais'd; and bright,
As, at the birth of morn, the eastern clime
Above th' horizon, where the sun declines;
To mine eyes, that upward, as from vale
To mountain sped, at th' extreme bound, a part
Excell'd in lustre all the front oppos'd.
And as the glow burns ruddiest o'er the wave,
That waits the sloping beam, which Phaeton
Ill knew to guide, and on each part the light
Diminish'd fades, intensest in the midst;
So burn'd the peaceful oriflame, and slack'd
On every side the living flame decay'd.
And in that midst their sportive pennons wav'd
Thousands of angels; in resplendence each

Distinct, and quaint adornment. At their glee
And carol, smil’d the Lovely One of heav’n,
That joy was in the eyes of all the blest.

Had I a tongue in eloquence as rich,
As is the colouring in fancy’s loom,
‘T were all too poor to utter the least part
Of that enchantment. When he saw mine eyes
Intent on her, that charm’d him, Bernard gaz’d
With so exceeding fondness, as infus’d
Ardour into my breast, unfelt before.

CANTO XXXII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

Freely the sage, though wrapt in musings high,
Assum'd the teacher's part, and mild began:
"The wound, that Mary clos'd, she open'd first,
Who sits so beautiful at Mary's feet.
The third in order, underneath her, lo!
Rachel with Beatrice. Sarah next,
Judith, Rebecca, and the gleaner maid,
Meek ancestress of him, who sang the songs
Of sore repentance in his sorrowful mood.
All, as I name them, down from deaf to leaf,
Are in gradation throned on the rose.
And from the seventh step, successively,
Adown the breathing tresses of the flow'r
Still doth the file of Hebrew dames proceed.
For these are a partition wall, whereby
The sacred stairs are sever'd, as the faith
In Christ divides them. On this part, where blooms
Each leaf in full maturity, are set
Such as in Christ, or ere he came, believ'd.
On th' other, where an intersected space
Yet shows the semicircle void, abide
All they, who look'd to Christ already come.
And as our Lady on her glorious stool,
And they who on their stools beneath her sit,
This way distinction make: e'en so on his,
The mighty Baptist that way marks the line
(He who endur'd the desert and the pains
Of martyrdom, and for two years of hell,
Yet still continued holy), and beneath,
Augustin, Francis, Benedict, and the rest,
Thus far from round to round. So heav'n's decree
Forecasts, this garden equally to fill.
With faith in either view, past or to come,
Learn too, that downward from the step, which cleaves

Midway the twain compartments, none there are
Who place obtain for merit of their own,
But have through others' merit been advanc'd,
On set conditions: spirits all releas'd,
Ere for themselves they had the power to choose.
And, if thou mark and listen to them well,
Their childish looks and voice declare as much.

"Here, silent as thou art, I know thy doubt;
And gladly will I loose the knot, wherein
Thy subtle thoughts have bound thee. From this realm
Excluded, chalice no entrance here may find,
No more shall hunger, thirst, or sorrow can.
A law immutable hath establish'd all;
Nor is there aught thou seest, that doth not fit,
Exactly, as the finger to the ring.
It is not therefore without cause, that these,
O'erspeedy comers to immortal life,
Are different in their shares of excellence.
Our Sovran Lord — that settleth this estate
In love and in delight so absolute,
That wish can dare no further — every soul,
Created in his joyous sight to dwell,
With grace at pleasure variously endows.
And for a proof th' effect may well suffice.
And 't is moreover most expressly mark'd
In holy scripture, where the twins are said
To, have struggled in the womb. Therefore, as grace
Inweaves the coronet, so every brow
Weareth its proper hue of orient light.
And merely in respect to his prime gift,
Not in reward of meritorious deed,
Hath each his several degree assign'd.
In early times with their own innocence
More was not wanting, than the parents' faith,
To save them: those first ages past, behoov'd
That circumcision in the males should imp
The flight of innocent wings: but since the day
Of grace hath come, without baptismal rites

In Christ accomplish'd, innocence herself
Must linger yet below. Now raise thy view
Unto the visage most resembling Christ:
For, in her splendour only, shalt thou win
The pow'r to look on him." Forthwith I saw
Such floods of gladness on her visage shower'd,
From holy spirits, winging that profound;
That, whatsoever I had yet beheld,
Had not so much suspended me with wonder,
Or shown me such similitude of God.
And he, who had to her descended, once,
On earth, now hail'd in heav'n; and on pois'd wing.
"Ave, Maria, Gratia Plena," sang:
To whose sweet anthem all the blissful court,
From all parts answ'ring, rang: that holier joy
Brooded the deep serene. "Father rever'd:
Who deign'st, for me, to quit the pleasant place,
Wherein thou sittest, by eternal lot!
Say, who that angel is, that with such glee
Beholds our queen, and so enamour'd glows
Of her high beauty, that all fire he seems."
So I again resorted to the lore
Of my wise teacher, he, whom Mary's charms
Embellish'd, as the sun the morning star;
Who thus in answer spake: "In him are summ'd,
Whatever of buxomness and free delight
May be in Spirit, or in angel, met:
And so beseems: for that he bare the palm
Down unto Mary, when the Son of God
Vouchsaf'd to clothe him in terrestrial weeds.
Now let thine eyes wait heedful on my words,
And note thou of this just and pious realm
The chiefest nobles. Those, highest in bliss,
The twain, on each hand next our empress thron'd,
Are as it were two roots unto this rose.
He to the left, the parent, whose rash taste
Proves bitter to his seed; and, on the right,
That ancient father of the holy church,
Into whose keeping Christ did give the keys

Of this sweet flow'r: near whom behold the seer,
That, ere he died, saw all the grievous times
Of the fair bride, who with the lance and nails
Was won. And, near unto the other, rests
The leader, under whom on manna fed
Th' ungrateful nation, fickle and perverse.
On th' other part, facing to Peter, lo!
Where Anna sits, so well content to look
On her lov'd daughter, that with moveless eye
She chants the loud hosanna: while, oppos'd
To the first father of your mortal kind,
Is Lucia, at whose hest thy lady sped,
When on the edge of ruin clos'd thine eye.

"But (for the vision hasteneth so an end)
Here break we off, as the good workman doth,
That shapes the cloak according to the cloth:
And to the primal love our ken shall rise;
That thou mayst penetrate the brightness, far
As sight can bear thee. Yet, alas! in sooth
Beating thy pennons, thinking to advance,
Thou backward fall'st. Grace then must first be gain'd;
Her grace, whose might can help thee. Thou in prayer
Seek her: and, with affection, whilst I sue,
Attend, and yield me all thy heart." He said,
And thus the saintly orison began.

CANTO XXXIII

Table of Contents for 'The Divine Comedy'

"O virgin mother, daughter of thy Son,
Created beings all in lowliness
Surpassing, as in height, above them all,
Term by th' eternal counsel pre-ordain'd,
Ennobler of thy nature, so advanc'd
In thee, that its great Maker did not scorn,
Himself, in his own work enclos'd to dwell!
For in thy womb rekindling shone the love
Reveal'd, whose genial influence makes now
This flower to germin in eternal peace!
Here thou to us, of charity and love,
Art, as the noon-day torch: and art, beneath,
To mortal men, of hope a living spring.
So mighty art thou, lady! and so great,
That he who grace desireth, and comes not
To thee for aidance, fain would have desire
Fly without wings. Nor only him who asks,
Thy bounty succours, but doth freely oft
Forerun the asking. Whatsoe'er may be
Of excellence in creature, pity mild,
Relenting mercy, large munificence,
Are all combin'd in thee. Here kneeleth one,
Who of all spirits hath review'd the state,
From the world's lowest gap unto this height.
Suppliant to thee he kneels, imploring grace
For virtue, yet more high to lift his ken
Toward the bliss supreme. And I, who ne'er
Coveted sight, more fondly, for myself,
Than now for him, my prayers to thee prefer,
(And pray they be not scant) that thou wouldst drive
Each cloud of his mortality away;
That on the sovran pleasure he may gaze.
This also I entreat of thee, O queen!
Who canst do what thou wilt! that in him thou

Wouldst after all he hath beheld, preserve
Affection sound, and human passions quell.
Lo! Where, with Beatrice, many a saint
Stretch their clasp'd hands, in furtherance of my suit!"

The eyes, that heav'n with love and awe regards,
Fix'd on the suitor, witness'd, how benign
She looks on pious pray'rs: then fasten'd they
On th' everlasting light, wherein no eye
Of creature, as may well be thought, so far
Can travel inward. I, meanwhile, who drew
Near to the limit, where all wishes end,
The ardour of my wish (for so behooved),
Ended within me. Beck'ning smil'd the sage,
That I should look aloft: but, ere he bade,
Already of myself aloft I look'd;
For visual strength, refining more and more,
Bare me into the ray authentical
Of sovran light. Thenceforward, what I saw,
Was not for words to speak, nor memory's self
To stand against such outrage on her skill.
As one, who from a dream awaken'd, straight,
All he hath seen forgets; yet still retains
Impression of the feeling in his dream;
E'en such am I: for all the vision dies,
As 't were, away; and yet the sense of sweet,
That sprang from it, still trickles in my heart.
Thus in the sun-thaw is the snow unseal'd;
Thus in the winds on flitting leaves was lost
The Sybil's sentence. O eternal beam!
(Whose height what reach of mortal thought may soar?)
Yield me again some little particle
Of what thou then appearedst, give my tongue
Power, but to leave one sparkle of thy glory,
Unto the race to come, that shall not lose
Thy triumph wholly, if thou waken aught
Of memory in me, and endure to hear
The record sound in this unequal strain.

Such keenness from the living ray I met,
That, if mine eyes had turn'd away, methinks,
I had been lost; but, so embolden'd, on
I pass'd, as I remember, till my view
Hover'd the brink of dread infinitude.

O grace! unenvying of thy boon! that gav'st
Boldness to fix so earnestly my ken
On th' everlasting splendour, that I look'd,
While sight was unconsum'd, and, in that depth,
Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, whatever
The universe unfolds; all properties
Of substance and of accident, beheld,
Compounded, yet one individual light
The whole. And of such bond methinks I saw
The universal form: for that whenever
I do but speak of it, my soul dilates
Beyond her proper self; and, till I speak,
One moment seems a longer lethargy,
Than five-and-twenty ages had appear'd
To that emprize, that first made Neptune wonder
At Argo's shadow darkening on his flood.

With fixed heed, suspense and motionless,
Wond'ring I gaz'd; and admiration still
Was kindled, as I gaz'd. It may not be,
That one, who looks upon that light, can turn
To other object, willingly, his view.
For all the good, that will may covet, there
Is summ'd; and all, elsewhere defective found,
Complete. My tongue shall utter now, no more
E'en what remembrance keeps, than could the babe's
That yet is moisten'd at his mother's breast.
Not that the semblance of the living light
Was chang'd (that ever as at first remain'd)
But that my vision quickening, in that sole
Appearance, still new miracles descry'd,
And toil'd me with the change. In that abyss
Of radiance, clear and lofty, seem'd methought,

Three orbs of triple hue clipt in one bound:
And, from another, one reflected seem'd,
As rainbow is from rainbow: and the third
Seem'd fire, breath'd equally from both. Oh speech
How feeble and how faint art thou, to give
Conception birth! Yet this to what I saw
Is less than little. Oh eternal light!
Sole in thyself that dwellst; and of thyself
Sole understood, past, present, or to come!
Thou smiledst; on that circling, which in thee
Seem'd as reflected splendour, while I mus'd;
For I therein, methought, in its own hue
Beheld our image painted: steadfastly
I therefore por'd upon the view. As one
Who vers'd in geometric lore, would fain
Measure the circle; and, though pondering long
And deeply, that beginning, which he needs,
Finds not; e'en such was I, intent to scan
The novel wonder, and trace out the form,
How to the circle fitted, and therein
How plac'd: but the flight was not for my wing;
Had not a flash darted athwart my mind,
And in the spleen unfolded what it sought.

Here vigour fail'd the tow'ring fantasy:
But yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel
In even motion, by the Love impell'd,
That moves the sun in heav'n and all the stars.

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THE DIVINE COMEDY (PROSE)

Translated by Charles Eliot Norton **CONTENTS**

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CANTO XXXIII.

Mural of Dante in the Uffizi Gallery, by Andrea del Castagno, c. 1450

HELL.

CANTO I.

Dante, astray in a wood, reaches the foot of a hill which he begins to ascend; he is hindered by three beasts; he turns back and is met by Virgil, who proposes to guide him into the eternal world.

Midway upon the road of our life I found myself within a dark wood, for the right way had been missed. Ah! how hard a thing it is to tell what this wild and rough and dense wood was, which in thought renews the fear! So bitter is it that death is little more. But in order to treat of the good that there I found, I will tell of the other things that I have seen there. I cannot well recount how I entered it, so full was I of slumber at that point where I abandoned the true way. But after I had arrived at the foot of a hill, where that valley ended which had pierced my heart with fear, I looked on high, and saw its shoulders clothed already with the rays of the planet[1] that leadeth men aright along every path. Then was the fear a little quieted which in the lake of my heart had lasted through the night that I passed so piteously. And even as one who with spent breath, issued out of the sea upon the shore, turns to the perilous water and gazes, so did my soul, which still was flying, turn back to look again upon the pass which never had a living person left.

[1] The sun, a planet according to the Ptolemaic system.

After I had rested a little my weary body I took my way again along the desert slope, so that the firm foot was always the lower. And ho! almost at the beginning of the steep a she-leopard, light and very nimble, which was covered with a spotted coat. And she did not move from before my face, nay, rather hindered so my road that to return I oftentimes had turned.

The time was at the beginning of the morning, and the Sun was mounting upward with those stars that were with him when Love Divine first set in motion those beautiful things;[1] so that the hour of the time and the sweet season were occasion of good hope to me concerning that wild beast with the dappled skin. But not so that the sight which appeared to me of a lion did not give me fear. He seemed to be coming against me, with head high and with ravening hunger, so that it seemed that the air was affrighted at him. And a she-wolf,[2] who with all cravings seemed laden in her meagreness, and already had made many folk to live forlorn, — she caused me so much heaviness, with the fear that came from sight of her, that I lost hope of the height And such as he is who gaineth willingly, and the time arrives that makes him lose, who in all his thoughts weeps and is sad, — such made me the beast without repose that, coming on against me, little by little was pushing me back thither where the Sun is silent.

[1] According to old tradition the spring was the season of the creation.

[2] These three beasts correspond to the triple division of sins into those of incontinence, of violence, and of fraud. See Canto XI.

While I was falling back to the low place, before mine eyes appeared one who through long silence seemed hoarse. When I saw him in the great desert, “Have pity on me!” I cried to him, “whatso thou art, or shade or real man.” He answered me: “Not man; man once I was, and my parents were Lombards, and Mantuans by country both. I was born sub Julio, though late, and I lived at Rome under the good Augustus, in the time of the false and lying gods. Poet was I, and sang of that just son of Anchises who came from Troy after proud Ilion had been burned. But thou, why returnest thou to so great annoy? Why dost thou not ascend the delectable mountain which is the source and cause of every joy?”

“Art thou then that Virgil and that fount which poureth forth so large a stream of speech?” replied I to him with bashful front: “O honor and light of the other poem I may the long seal avail me, and the great love, which have made me search thy volume! Thou art my master and my author; thou alone art he from whom I took the fair style that hath done me honor. Behold the beast because of which I turned; help me against her, famous sage, for she makes any veins and pulses tremble.” “Thee it behoves to hold another course,” he replied, when he saw me weeping, “if thou wishest to escape from this savage place; for this beast, because of which thou criest out, lets not any one pass along her way, but so hinders him that she kills him! and she has a nature so malign and evil that she never sates her greedy will, and after food is hungrier than before. Many are the animals with which she wives, and there shall be more yet, till the hound [1] shall come that will make her die of grief. He shall not feed on land or goods, but wisdom and love and valor, and his birthplace shall be between Feltro and Feltro. Of that humble[2] Italy shall he be the salvation, for which the virgin Camilla died, and Euryalus, Turnus and Nisus of their wounds. He shall hunt her through every town till he shall have set her back in hell, there whence envy first sent her forth. Wherefore I think and deem it for thy best that thou follow me, and I will be thy guide, and will lead thee hence through the eternal place where thou shalt hear the despairing shrieks, shalt see the ancient spirits woeful who each proclaim the second death. And then thou shalt see those who are contented in the fire, because they hope to come, whenever it may be, to the blessed folk; to whom if thou wilt thereafter ascend, them shall be a soul more worthy than I for that. With her I will leave thee at my departure; for that Emperor who reigneth them above, because I was rebellious to His law, wills not that into His city any one should come through me. In all parts He governs and them He reigns: there in His city and His lofty seat. O happy he whom thereto He elects!”

And I to him, “Poet, I beseech thee by that God whom thou didst not know, in order that I may escape this ill and worse, that thou lead me thither whom thou now hest said, so that I may see the gate of St. Peter, and those whom thou makest so afflicted.”

[1] Of whom the hound is the symbol, and to whom Dante looked for the deliverance of Italy from the discorda and misrule that made her wretched, is still matter of doubt, after centuries of controversy.

[2] Fallen, humiliated.

Then he moved on, and I behind him kept.

CANTO II.

Dante, doubtful of his own powers, is discouraged at the outset. — Virgil cheers him by telling him that he has been sent to his aid by a blessed Spirit from Heaven. — Dante casts off fear, and the poets proceed.

The day was going, and the dusky air was taking the living things that are on earth from their fatigues, and I alone was preparing to sustain the war alike of the road, and of the woe which the mind that erreth not shall retrace. O Muses, O lofty genius, now assist me! O mind that didst inscribe that which I saw, here shall thy nobility appear! I began:— "Poet, that guidest me, consider my virtue, if it is sufficient, ere to the deep pass thou trustest me. Thou sayest that the parent of Silvius while still corruptible went to the immortal world and was there in the body. Wherefore if the Adversary of every ill was then courteous, thinking on the high effect that should proceed from him, and on the Who and the What,[1] it seemeth not unmeet to the man of understanding; for in the empyreal heaven he had been chosen for father of revered Rome and of her empire; both which (to say truth indeed) were ordained for the holy place where the successor of the greater Peter hath his seat. Through this going, whereof thou givest him vaunt, he learned things which were the cause of his victory and of the papal mantle. Afterward the Chosen Vessel went thither to bring thence comfort to that faith which is the beginning of the way of salvation. But I, why go I thither? or who concedes it? I am not Aeneas, I am not Paul; me worthy of this, neither I nor others think; wherefore if I give myself up to go, I fear lest the going may be mad. Thou art wise, thou understandest better than I speak."

[1] Who he was, and what should result.

And as is he who unwills what he willed, and because of new thoughts changes his design, so that he quite withdraws from beginning, such I became on that dark hillside: wherefore in my thought I abandoned the enterprise which had been so hasty in the beginning.

"If I have rightly understood thy speech," replied that shade of the magnanimous one, "thy soul is hurt by cowardice, which oftentimes encumbereth a man so that it turns him back from honorable enterprise, as false seeing does a beast when it is startled. In order that thou loose thee from this fear I will tell thee wherefore I have come, and what I heard at the first moment that I grieved for thee. I was among those who are suspended,[1] and a Lady called me, so blessed and beautiful that I besought her to command. Her eyes were more lucent than the star, and she began to speak to me sweet and low, with angelic voice, in her own tongue: 'O courteous Mantuan soul, of whom the fame yet

lasteth in the world, and shall last so long as the world endureth! a friend of mine and not of fortune upon the desert hillside is so hindered on his road that he has turned for fear, and I am afraid, through that which I have heard of him in heaven, lest already he be so astray that I may have risen late to his succor. Now do thou move, and with thy speech ornate, and with whatever is needful for his deliverance, assist him so that I may be consoled for him. I am Beatrice who make thee go. I come from a place whither I desire to return. Love moved me, and makes me speak. When I shall be before my Lord, I will commend thee often unto Him.' Then she was silent, and thereon I began: 'O Lady of Virtue, thou alone through whom the human race surpasseth all contained within that heaven which hath the smallest circles! [2] so pleasing unto me is thy command that to obey it, were it already done, were slow to me. Thou hast no need further to open unto me thy will; but tell me the cause why thou guardest not thyself from descending down here into this centre, from the ample place whither thou burnest to return.' 'Since thou wishest to know so inwardly, I will tell thee briefly,' she replied to me, 'wherefore I fear not to come here within. One ought to fear those things only that have power of doing harm, the others not, for they are not dreadful. I am made by God, thanks be to Him, such that your misery toucheth me not, nor doth the flame of this burning assail me. A gentle Lady[3] is in heaven who hath pity for this hindrance whereto I send thee, so that stern judgment there above she breaketh. She summoned Lucia in her request, and said, "Thy faithful one now hath need of thee, and unto thee I commend him." Lucia, the foe of every cruel one, rose and came to the place where I was, seated with the ancient Rachel. She said, "Beatrice, true praise of God, why dost thou not succor him who so loved thee that for thee he came forth from the vulgar throng? Dost thou not hear the pity of his plaint? Dost thou not see the death that combats him beside the stream whereof the sea hath no vaunt?" In the world never were persons swift to seek their good, and to fly their harm, as I, after these words were uttered, came here below, from my blessed seat, putting my trust in thy upright speech, which honors thee and them who have heard it.' After she had said this to me, weeping she turned her lucent eyes, whereby she made me more speedy in coming. And I came to thee as she willed. Thee have I delivered from that wild beast that took from thee the short ascent of the beautiful mountain. What is it then? Why, why dost thou hold back? why dost thou harbor such cowardice in thy heart? why hast thou not daring and boldness, since three blessed Ladies care for thee in the court of Heaven, and my speech pledges thee such good?"

[1] In Limbo, neither in Hell nor Heaven.

[2] The heaven of the moon, nearest to the earth.

[3] The Virgin.

As flowerets, bent and closed by the chill of night, after the sun shines on them straighten themselves all open on their stem, so I became with my weak virtue, and such good daring hastened to my heart that I began like one enfranchised: “Oh compassionate she who succored me! and thou courteous who didst speedily obey the true words that she addressed to thee! Thou by thy words hast so disposed my heart with desire of going, that I have returned unto my first intent. Go on now, for one sole will is in us both: Thou Leader, thou Lord, and thou Master.” Thus I said to him; and when he had moved on, I entered along the deep and savage road.

CANTO III.

The gate of Hell. — Virgil lends Dante in. — The punishment of the neither good nor bad. — Aeheron, and the sinners on its bank. — Charon. — Earthquake. — Dante swoons.

“Through me is the way into the woeful city; through me is the way into eternal woe; through me is the way among the lost people. Justice moved my lofty maker: the divine Power, the supreme Wisdom and the primal Love made me. Before me were no things created, unless eternal, and I eternal last. Leave every hope, ye who enter!”

These words of color obscure I saw written at the top of a gate; whereat I, “Master, their meaning is dire to me.”

And he to me, like one who knew, “Here it behoves to leave every fear; it behoves that all cowardice should here be dead. We have come to the place where I have told thee that thou shalt see the woeful people, who have lost the good of the understanding.”

And when he had put his hand on mine, with a glad countenance, wherefrom I took courage, he brought me within the secret things. Here sighs, laments, and deep wailings were resounding though the starless air; wherefore at first I wept thereat. Strange tongues, horrible cries, words of woe, accents of anger, voices high and hoarse, and sounds of hands with them, were making a tumult which whirls forever in that air dark without change, like the sand when the whirlwind breathes.

And I, who had my head girt with horror, said, “Master, what is it that I hear? and what folk are they who seem in woe so vanquished?”

And he to me, “This miserable measure the wretched souls maintain of those who lived without infamy and without praise. Mingled are they with that caitiff choir of the angels, who were not rebels, nor were faithful to God, but were for themselves. The heavens chased them out in order to be not less beautiful, nor doth the depth of Hell receive them, because the damned would have some glory from them.”

And I, “Master, what is so grievous to them, that makes them lament so bitterly?”

He answered, “I will tell thee very briefly. These have no hope of death; and their blind life is so debased, that they are envious of every other lot. Fame of them the world permitteth not to be; mercy and justice disdain them. Let us not speak of them, but do thou look and pass on.”

And I, who was gazing, saw a banner, that whirling ran so swiftly that it seemed to me to scorn all repose, and behind it came so long a train of folk, that I could never have believed death had undone so many. After I had distinguished some among them, I saw and knew the shade of him who made, through cowardice, the great refusal. [1] At once I understood and was certain, that this was the sect of the caitiffs displeasing unto God, and unto his enemies. These wretches, who never were alive, were naked, and much stung by gad-flies and by wasps that were there. These streaked their faces with blood, which, mingled with tears, was harvested at their feet by loathsome worms.

[1] Who is intended by these words is uncertain.

And when I gave myself to looking onward, I saw people on the bank of a great river; wherefore I said, “Master, now grant to me that I may know who these are, and what rule makes them appear so ready to pass over, as I discern through the faint light.” And he to me, “The things will be clear to thee, when we shall set our steps on the sad marge of Acheron.” Then with eyes bashful and cast down, fearing lest my speech had been irksome to him, far as to the river I refrained from speaking.

And lo! coming toward us in a boat, an old man, white with ancient hair, crying, “Woe to you, wicked souls! hope not ever to see Heaven! I come to carry you to the other bank, into eternal darkness, to heat and frost. And thou who art there, living soul, depart from these that are dead.” But when he saw that I did not depart, he said, “By another way, by other ports thou shalt come to the shore, not here, for passage; it behoves that a lighter bark bear thee.”[1]

[1] The boat that bears the souls to Purgatory. Charon recognizes that Dante is not among the damned.

And my Leader to him, “Charon, vex not thyself, it is thus willed there where is power to do that which is willed; and farther ask not.” Then the fleecy cheeks were quiet of the pilot of the livid marsh, who round about his eyes had wheels of flame.

But those souls, who were weary and naked, changed color, and gnashed their teeth soon as they heard his cruel words. They blasphemed God and their parents, the human race, the place, the time and the seed of their sowing and of their birth. Then, bitterly weeping, they drew back all of them together to the evil bank, that waits for every man who fears not God. Charon the demon, with eyes of glowing coal, beckoning them, collects them all; he beats with his oar whoever lingers.

As in autumn the leaves fall off one after the other, till the bough sees all its spoils upon the earth, in like wise the evil seed of Adam throw themselves from

that shore one by one at signals, as the bird at his call. Thus they go over the dusky wave, and before they have landed on the farther side, already on this a new throng is gathered.

"My son," said the courteous Master, "those who die in the wrath of God, all meet together here from every land. And they are eager to pass over the stream, for the divine justice spurs them, so that fear is turned to desire. This way a good soul never passes; and therefore if Charon snarleth at thee, thou now mayest well know what his speech signifies." This ended, the dark plain trembled so mightily, that the memory of the terror even now bathes me with sweat. The tearful land gave forth a wind that flashed a vermilion light which vanquished every sense of mine, and I fell as a man whom slumber seizes.

CANTO IV.

The further side of Acheron. — Virgil leads Dante into Limbo, the First Circle of Hell, containing the spirits of those who lived virtuously but without Christianity. — Greeting of Virgil by his fellow poets. — They enter a castle, where are the shades of ancient worthies. — Virgil and Dante depart.

A heavy thunder broke the deep sleep in my head, so that I started up like a person who by force is wakened. And risen erect, I moved my rested eye round about, and looked fixedly to distinguish the place where I was. True it is, that I found myself on the verge of the valley of the woeful abyss that gathers in thunder of infinite wailings. Dark, profound it was, and cloudy, so that though I fixed my sight on the bottom I did not discern anything there.

"Now we descend down here into the blind world," began the Poet all deadly pale, "I will be first, and thou shalt be second."

And I, who had observed his color, said, "How shall I come, if thou fearest, who art wont to be a comfort to my doubting?" And he to me, "The anguish of the folk who are down here depicts upon my face that pity which thou takest for fear. Let us go on, for the long way urges us."

So he set forth, and so he made me enter within the first circle that girds the abyss. Here, so far as could be heard, there was no plaint but that of sighs which made the eternal air to tremble: this came of the woe without torments felt by the crowds, which were many and great, of infants and of women and of men.

The good Master to me, "Thou dost not ask what spirits are these that thou seest. Now I would have thee know, before thou goest farther, that they sinned not; and if they have merits it sufficeth not, because they had not baptism, which is part of the faith that thou believest; and if they were before Christianity, they did not duly worship God: and of such as these am I myself. Through such defects, and not through other guilt, are we lost, and only so far harmed that without hope we live in desire."

Great woe seized me at my heart when I heard him, because I knew that people of much worth were suspended in that limbo. "Tell me, my Master, tell me, Lord," began I, with wish to be assured of that faith which vanquishes every error,[1] "did ever any one who afterwards was blessed go out from here, either by his own or by another's merit?" And he, who understood my covert speech, answered, "I was new in this state when I saw a Mighty One come hither crowned with sign of victory. He drew out hence the shade of the first parent, of Abel his son, and that of Noah, of Moses the law-giver and obedient, Abraham the patriarch, and David the King, Israel with his father, and with his offspring, and with Rachel, for whom he did so much, and others many; and He made them

blessed: and I would have thee know that before these, human spirits were not saved."

[1] Wishing especially to be assured in regard to the descent of Christ into Hell.

We ceased not going on because he spoke, but all the while were passing through the wood, the wood I mean of crowded spirits. Nor yet had our way been long from where I slept, when I saw a fire, that conquered a hemisphere of darkness. We were still a little distant from it, yet not so far that I could not partially discern that honorable folk possessed that place. "O thou that honorest both science and art, these, who are they, that have such honor that from the condition of the others it sets them apart?" And he to me, "The honorable fame of them which resounds above in thy life wins grace in heaven that so advances them." At this a voice was heard by me, "Honor the loftiest Poet! his shade returns that was departed." When the voice had ceased and was quiet, I saw four great shades coming to us: they had a semblance neither sad nor glad. The good Master began to say, "Look at him with that sword in hand who cometh before the three, even as lord. He is Homer, the sovereign poet; the next who comes is Horace, the satirist; Ovid is the third, and the last is Lucan. Since each shares with me the name that the single voice sounded, they do me honor, and in that do well"

Thus I saw assembled the fair school of that Lord of the loftiest song which above the others as an eagle flies. After they had discoursed somewhat together, they turned to me with sign of salutation; and my Master smiled thereat. And far more of honor yet they did me, for they made me of their band, so that I was the sixth amid so much wit. Thus we went on as far as the light, speaking things concerning which silence is becoming, even as was speech there where I was.

We came to the foot of a noble castle, seven times circled by high walls, defended round about by a fair streamlet. This we passed as if hard ground; through seven gates I entered with these sages; we came to a meadow of fresh verdure. People were there with eyes slow and grave, of great authority in their looks; they spake seldom, and with soft voices. Thus we drew apart, on one side, into a place open, luminous, and high, so that they all could be seen. There opposite upon the green enamel were shown to me the great spirits, whom to have seen I inwardly exalt myself.

I saw Electra with many companions, among whom I knew both Hector and Aeneas, Caesar in armor, with his gerfalcon eyes; I saw Camilla and Penthesilea on the other side, and I saw the King Latinus, who was seated with Lavinia his daughter. I saw that Brutus who drove out Tarquin; Lucretia, Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia; and alone, apart, I saw the Saladin. When I raised my brow a little

more, I saw the Master of those who know, seated amid the philosophic family; all regard him, all do him honor. Here I saw both Socrates and Plato, who before the others stand nearest to him; Democritus, who ascribes the world to chance; Diogenes, Anaxagoras, and Thales, Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Zeno; and I saw the good collector of the qualities, Dioscorides, I mean; and I saw Orpheus, Tully, and Linus, and moral Seneca, Euclid the geometer, and Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Avicenna, Galen, and Averrhoes, who made the great comment. I cannot report of all in full, because the long theme so drives me that many times speech comes short of fact.

The company of six is reduced to two. By another way the wise guide leads me, out from the quiet, into the air that trembles, and I come into a region where is nothing that can give light.

CANTO V.

The Second Circle, that of Carnal Sinners. — Minos. — Shades renowned of old. — Francesca da Rimini.

Thus I descended from the first circle down into the second, which girdles less space, and so much more woe that it goads to wailing. There abides Minos horribly, and snarls; he examines the sins at the entrance; he judges, and he sends according as he entwines himself. I mean, that, when the miscreant spirit comes there before him, it confesses itself wholly, and that discerner of sins sees what place of Hell is for it; he girdles himself with his tail so many times as the degrees he wills it should be sent down. Always before him stand many of them. They go, in turn, each to the judgment; they speak, and hear, and then are whirled below.

"O thou that comest to the woeful inn," said Minos to me, when he saw me, leaving the act of so great an office, "beware how thou enterest, and to whom thou trustest thyself; let not the amplitude of the entrance deceive thee." And my Leader to him, "Why then dost thou cry out? Hinder not his fated going; thus is it willed there where is power to do that which is willed; and ask thou no more."

Now the woeful notes begin to make themselves heard; now am I come where much lamentation smites me. I had come into a place mute of all light, that bellows as the sea does in a tempest, if it be combated by opposing winds. The infernal hurricane that never rests carries along the spirits in its rapine; whirling and smiting it molests them. When they arrive before its rushing blast, here are shrieks, and bewailing, and lamenting; here they blaspheme the power divine. I understood that to such torment are condemned the carnal sinners who subject reason to appetite. And as their wings bear along the starlings in the cold season in a troop large and full, so that blast the evil spirits; hither, thither, down, up it carries them; no hope ever comforts them, not of repose, but even of less pain.

And as the cranes go singing their lays, making in air a long line of themselves, so saw I come, uttering wails, shades borne along by the aforesaid strife. Wherefore I said, "Master, who are those folk whom the black air so castigates?" "The first of these of whom thou wishest to have knowledge," said he to me then, "was empress of many tongues. To the vice of luxury was she so abandoned that lust she made licit in her law, to take away the blame she had incurred. She is Semiramis, of whom it is read that she succeeded Ninus and had been his spouse; she held the land which the Soldan rules. That other is she who, for love, killed herself, and broke faith to the ashes of Sichaeus. Next is Cleopatra, the luxurious. See Helen, for whom so long a time of ill revolved; and

see the great Achilles, who at the end fought with love. See Paris, Tristan,—" and more than a thousand shades he showed me with his finger, and named them, whom love had parted from our life.

After I had heard my Teacher name the dames of eld and the cavaliers, pity overcame me, and I was well nigh bewildered. I began, "Poet, willingly would I speak with those two that go together, and seem to be so light upon the wind." And he to me, "Thou shalt see when they shall be nearer to us, and do thou then pray them by that love which leads them, and they will come." Soon as the wind sways them toward us I lifted my voice, "O weary souls, come speak to us, if One forbid it not."

As doves, called by desire, with wings open and steady, fly through the air to their sweet nest, borne by their will, these issued from the troop where Dido is, coming to us through the malign air, so strong was the compassionate cry.

"O living creature, gracious and benign, that goest through the lurid air visiting us who stained the world blood-red, — if the King of the universe were a friend we would pray Him for thy peace, since thou hast pity on our perverse ill. Of what it pleaseth thee to hear, and what to speak, we will hear and we will speak to you, while the wind, as now, is hushed for us. The city where I was born sits upon the sea-shore, where the Po, with its followers, descends to have peace. Love, that on gentle heart quickly lays hold, seized him for the fair person that was taken from me, and the mode still hurts me. Love, which absolves no loved one from loving, seized me for the pleasing of him so strongly that, as thou seest, it does not even now abandon me. Love brought us to one death. Caina awaits him who quenched our life." These words were borne to us from them.

Soon as I had heard those injured souls I bowed my face, and held it down, until the Poet said to me, "What art thou thinking?" When I replied, I began, "Alas! how many sweet thoughts, how great desire, led these unto the woeful pass." Then I turned me again to them, and I spoke, and began, "Francesca, thy torments make me sad and piteous to weeping. But tell me, at the time of the sweet sighs by what and how did love concede to you to know the dubious desires?" And she to me, "There is no greater woe than in misery to remember the happy time, and that thy Teacher knows. But if to know the first root of our love thou hast so great a longing, I will do like one who weeps and tells.

"We were reading one day, for delight, of Lancelot, how love constrained him. We were alone and without any suspicion. Many times that reading made us lift our eyes, and took the color from our faces, but only one point was that which overcame us. When we read of the longed-for smile being kissed by such a lover, this one, who never from me shall be divided, kissed my mouth all

trembling. Galahaut was the book, and he who wrote it. That day we read in it no farther."[1]

[1] In the Romance, it was Galahaut that prevailed on Guinevere to give a kiss to Lancelot.

While one spirit said this the other was weeping so that through pity I swooned, as if I had been dying, and fell as a dead body falls.

CANTO VI.

The Third Circle, that of the Gluttonous. — Cerberus. — Ciacco.

When the mind returned, which closed itself before the pity of these two kinsfolk, that had all confounded me with sadness, new torments and new tormented souls I see around me wherever I move, and howsoever I turn, and wherever I gaze.

I am in the third circle, that of the rain eternal, accursed, cold, and heavy. Its rule and quality are never new. Coarse hail, and foul water and snow pour down through the tenebrous air; the earth that receives them stinks. Cerberus, a beast cruel and monstrous, with three throats barks doglike above the people that are here submerged. He has vermilion eyes, and a greasy and black beard, and a big belly, and hands armed with claws: he tears the spirits, flays them, and rends them. The rain makes them howl like dogs; of one of their sides they make a screen for the other; the profane wretches often turn themselves.

When Cerberus, the great worm, observed us he opened his mouths, and showed his fangs to us; not a limb had he that he kept quiet. And my Leader opened wide his hands, took some earth, and with full fists threw it into the ravenous gullets. As the dog that barking craves, and becomes quiet when he bites his food, and is intent and fights only to devour it, such became those filthy faces of the demon Cerberus, who so thunders at the souls that they would fain be deaf.

We were passing over the shades whom the heavy rain subdues, and were setting our feet upon their vain show that seems a body. They all of them lay upon the ground, except one who raised himself to sit, quickly as he saw us passing before him. “O thou who art led through this Hell,” he said to me, “recognize me, if thou canst; thou wast made before I was unmade.” And I to him, “The anguish which thou hast perchance withdraws thee from my memory, so that it seems not that I ever saw thee. But tell me who thou art, that in a place so woeful art set, and with such a punishment, that if any other is greater none is so displeasing.” And he to me, “Thy city which is so full of envy, that already the sack runs over, held me in it, in the serene life. You citizens called me Ciacco; [1] for the damnable sin of gluttony, as thou seest, I am broken by the rain. And I, wretched soul, am not alone, for all these endure like punishment, for like sin,” and more he said not. I answered him, “Ciacco, thy trouble so weighs upon me, that it invites me to weeping; but tell me, if thou canst, to what will come the

citizens of the divided city; if any one in it is just; and tell me the reason why such great discord has assailed it."

[1] Ciacco, in popular speech, signifies a hog.

And he to me, "After long contention they will come to blood, and the savage party will chase out the other with great injury. Thereafter within three suns it behoves this to fall, and the other to surmount through the force of one who even now is tacking. It will hold high its front long time, keeping the other under heavy burdens, however it may lament and be shamed thereat. Two men are just, but there they are not heeded; Pride, Envy, Avarice are the three sparks that have inflamed their hearts."[1]

Here he set end unto the lamentable sound.

[1] This prophecy relates to the dissensions and violence of the parties of the Whites and the Blacks by which Florence was rent. The "savage party" was that of the Whites, who were mainly Ghibellines. The "one who even now is tacking" was the Pope, Boniface VIII., who was playing fast and loose with both. Who the "two just men" were is unknown.

And I to him, "Still I would that thou teach me, and that of more speech thou make a gift to me. Farinata and the Tegghiaio who were so worthy, Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo, and the Mosca, and the rest who set their minds on well-doing, tell me where they are, and cause that I may know them, for great desire constrains me to learn if Heaven sweeten them, or Hell envenom.

And he, "They are among the blacker souls: a different sin weighs them down to the bottom; if thou so far descendest, thou canst see them. But when thou shalt be in the sweet world I pray thee that thou bring me to the memory of others. More I say not to thee, and more I answer thee not." His straight eyes he twisted then awry, looked at me a little, and then bent his head, and fell with it level with the other blind.

And the Leader said to me, "He wakes no more this side the sound of the angelic trump. When the hostile Sovereign shall come, each one will find again his dismal tomb, will take again his flesh and his shape, will hear that which through eternity reechoes."

Thus we passed along with slow steps through the foul mixture of the shades and of the rain, touching a little on the future life. Wherefore I said, "Master, these torments will they increase after the great sentence, or will they become less, or will they be just as burning?" And he to me, "Return to thy science, which declares that the more perfect a thing is the more it feels the good, and so the pain. Though this accursed people never can attain to true perfection, it expects thereafter to be more than now."

We took a circling course along that road, speaking far more than I repeat; and came to the point where the descent is. Here we found Pluto,[1] the great

enemy.

[1] Pluto appears here not as Hades, the god of the lower world, but in his character as the giver of wealth.

CANTO VII.

The Fourth Circle, that of the Avaricious and the Prodigal. — Pluto. — Fortune. — The Styx. — The Fifth Circle, that of the Wrathful and the Sullen.

"Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe," — began Pluto with his clucking voice. And that gentle Sage, who knew everything, said to comfort me, "Let not thy fear hurt thee; for whatso power he have shall not take from thee the descent of this rock." Then he turned to that swollen lip and said, "Be silent, accursed wolf! inwardly consume thyself with thine own rage: not without cause is this going to the abyss; it is willed on high, there where Michael did vengeance on the proud adultery."[1] As sails swollen by the wind fall in a heap when the mast snaps, so fell to earth the cruel beast.

[1] Adultery, in the sense of infidelity to God.

Thus we descended into the fourth hollow, taking more of the woeful bank that gathers in the evil of the whole universe. Ah, Justice of God! Who heapeth up so many new travails and penalties as I saw? And why doth our sin so waste us? As doth the wave, yonder upon Charybdis, which is broken on that which it encounters, so it behoves that here the people counterdance.

Here saw I people more than elsewhere many, and from one side and the other with great howls rolling weights by force of chest. They struck against each other, and then just there each turned, rolling backward, crying, "Why keepest thou?" and "Why flingest thou away?" Thus they turned through the dark circle on either hand to the opposite point, still crying out their opprobrious verse; then each, when he had come through his half circle, wheeled round to the other joust.

And I, who had my heart well-nigh pierced through, said, "My Master, now declare to me what folk is this, and if all these tonsured ones on our left were clerks."

And he to me, "All of these were so asquint in mind in the first life that they made no spending there with measure. Clearly enough their voices bay it out, when they come to the two points of the circle where the contrary sin divides them. These were clerks who have no hairy covering on their head, and Popes and Cardinals, in whom avarice practices its excess."

And I, "Master, among such as these I ought surely to recognize some who were polluted with these evils."

And he to me, "Vain thought thou harborest; the undiscerning life that made them foul, to all recognition now makes them dim. Forever will they come to the

two buttings; these will rise from the sepulchre with closed fist, and these with shorn hair. Ill-giving and ill-keeping have taken from them the fair world, and set them to this scuffle; such as it is, I adorn not words for it. Now canst thou, son, see the brief jest of the goods that are committed unto Fortune, for which the human race so scramble; for all the gold that is beneath the moon, or that ever was, of these weary souls could not make a single one repose."

"Master," said I to him, "now tell me further; this Fortune, on which thou touchest for me, what is it, that hath the goods of the world so in its clutches?"

And he to me, "O creatures foolish, how great is that ignorance that harms you! I would have thee now take in my judgment of her. He whose wisdom transcendeth all made the heavens, and gave them their guides, so that every part on every part doth shine, equally distributing the light. In like wise for the splendors of the world, He ordained a general ministress and guide, who should ever and anon transfer the vain goods from race to race, and from one blood to another, beyond the resistance of human wit. Wherefore one race rules, and the other languishes, pursuant to her judgment, which is occult as the snake in the grass. Your wisdom hath no withstanding of her: she provides, judges and maintains her realm, as theirs the other gods. Her permutations have no truce; necessity compels her to be swift, so often cometh he who obtains a turn. This is she who is so set upon the cross, even by those who ought to give her praise, giving her blame amiss and ill report. But she is blessed and hears this not. With the other Primal Creatures glad she turns her sphere, and blessed she rejoices. But now let us descend to greater woe. Already every star sinks that was rising when I set out, and too long stay is forbidden."

We crossed the circle to the other bank, above a fount that boils and pours down through a cleft that proceeds from it. The water was far darker than perse;[1] and we, in company with the dusky waves, entered down through a strange way. A marsh it makes, that is named Styx, this dismal little stream, when it has descended to the foot of the malign gray slopes. And I, who stood intent to gaze, saw muddy people in that swamp, all naked and with look of hurt. They were smiting each other, not only with hands, but with head, and with chest, and with feet, mangling one another piecemeal with their teeth.

[1] Purple-black.

The good Master said, "Son, now thou seest the souls of those whom anger overcame; and likewise I would have thee believe for certain that beneath the water are folk who sigh, and make this water bubble at the surface, as thine eye tells thee wherever it turns. Fixed in the slime, they say, 'Sullen were we in the sweet air that by the Sun is gladdened, bearing within ourselves the sluggish

fume; now we are sullen in the black mire.’ This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot speak with entire words.”[1]

[1] The sin here punished is that known to the Middle Ages as acedia, or accidie, — slackness in good works, and spiritual gloom and despondency. In the Parson’s Tale Chaucer says: “Envie and ire maken bitternesse in heart, which bitternesse is mother of accidie.”

Thus we circled a great arc of the foul fen, between the dry bank and the slough, with eyes turned on those who guzzle the mire. We came at length to the foot of a tower.

CANTO VIII.

The Fifth Circle. — Phlegyas and his boat. — Passage of the Styx. — Filippo Argenti. — The City of Dis. — The demons refuse entrance to the poets.

I say, continuing, that, long before we were at the foot of the high tower, our eyes went upward to its top because of two flamelets that we saw set there, and another giving sigual back from so far that hardly could the eye reach it. And I turned me to the Sea of all wisdom; I said, “This one, what says it? and what answers that other fire? and who are they that make it?” And he to me, “Upon the foul waves already thou mayest discern that which is expected, if the fume of the marsh hide it not from thee.”

Bowstring never sped arrow from itself that ran so swift a course through the air, as a very little boat which I saw coming through the water toward us at that instant, under the direction of a single ferryman, who was crying out, “Art thou then come, fell soul?”

“Phlegyas, Phlegyas, this time thou criest out in vain,” said my Lord; “longer thou shalt not have us than only while crossing the slough.” As one who listens to some great deceit that has been practiced on him, and then chafes at it, such became Phlegyas in his stifled anger.

My Leader descended into the bark and then he made me enter after him, and only when I was in did it seem laden. Soon as my Leader and I were in the boat, the antique prow goes its way, cutting more of the water than it is wont with others.

While we were running through the dead channel, before me showed himself one full of mud, and said, “Who art thou that comest before the hour?” And I to him, “If I come I stay not; but thou, who art thou that art become so foul?” He answered, “Thou seest that I am one who weeps.” And I to him, “With weeping and with wailing, accursed spirit, do thou remain, for I know thee although thou art all filthy.” Then he stretched to the boat both his hands, whereat the wary Master thrust him back, saying, “Begone there, with the other dogs!” Then with his arms he clasped my neck, kissed my face, and said, “Disdainful soul, blessed be she who bore thee! This one was an arrogant person in the world; no goodness is there that adorns his memory; therefore is his shade so furious here. How many now up there are held great kings who shall stand here like swine in mire, leaving of themselves horrible dispraises.” And I, “Master, I should much like to see him ducked in this broth before we depart from the lake.” And he to me, “Ere the shore allows thee to see it thou shalt be satisfied; it will be fitting

that thou enjoy such a desire." After this a little I saw such rending of him by the muddy folk that I still praise God therefor, and thank Him for it. All cried, "At Filippo Argenti!" and the raging florentine spirit turned upon himself with his teeth. Here we left him; so that I tell no more of him.

But on my ears there smote a wailing, whereat forward intent I open wide my eye. And the good Master said, "Now, son, the city draws near that is named Dis, with its heavy citizens, with its great throng." And I, "Master, already in the valley therewithin I clearly discern its mosques vermilion, as if issuing from fire." And he said to me, "The eternal fire that blazes within them displays them red as thou seest in this nether Hell."

We at last arrived within the deep ditches that encompass that disconsolate city. The walls seemed to me to be of iron. Not without first making a great circuit did we come to a place where the ferryman loudly shouted to us, "Out with you, here is the entrance."

Upon the gates I saw more than a thousand of those rained down from heaven who angrily were saying, "Who is this, that without death goes through the realm of the dead folk?" And my wise Master made a sign of wishing to speak secretly with them. Then they shut in a little their great scorn, and said, "Come thou alone, and let him be gone who so boldly entered on this realm. Alone let him return on the mad path: let him try if he can; for thou, who hast escorted him through so dark a region, shalt remain here."

Think, Reader, if I was discomforted at the sound of the accursed words, for I did not believe ever to return hither.[1]

[1] To this world.

"O my dear Leader, who more than seven times hast renewed assurance in me, and drawn me from deep peril that stood confronting me, leave me not," said I, "thus undone; and, if the going farther onward be denied us, let us together retrace our footprints quickly." And that Lord who had led me thither said to me, "Fear not, for no one can take from us our onward way, by Such an one it is given to us. But here await me, and comfort thy dejected spirit and feed on good hope, for I will not leave thee in the nether world."

So the sweet Father goes away, and here abandons me, and I remain in suspense; and yes and no contend within my head. I could not hear what he set forth to them, but he had not staid there long with them, when each ran vying back within. These our adversaries closed the gates on the breast of my Lord, who remained without, and returned to me with slow steps. He held his eyes upon the ground, and his brow was shorn of all hardihood, and he said in sighs, "Who hath denied to me the houses of woe?" And he said to me, "Thou, because

I am wroth, be not dismayed, for I shall win the strife, whoever circle round within for the defence. This their insolence is not new, for of old they used it at a less secret gate, which still is found without a bolt. Above it thou didst see the dead inscription; and already on this side of it descends the steep, passing without escort through the circles, One such that by him the city shall be opened to us.”

CANTO IX.

The City of Dis. — Erichtho. — The Three Furies. — The Heavenly Messenger. — The Sixth Circle, that of the Heresiarchs.

That color which cowardice painted outwardly on me when I saw my Guide turn back, repressed more speedily his own new color. He stopped attentive, like a man that listens, for the eye could not lead him far through the black air, and through the dense fog.

"Yet it must be for us to win the fight," began he, "unless — Such an one offered herself to us.[1] Oh how slow it seems till Some one here arrive!"[2]

[1] Beatrice.

[2] The messenger from Heaven, referred to in the last verses of the last canto.

I saw well how he covered up the beginning with the rest that came after, which were words different from the first. But nevertheless his speech gave me fear, because I drew his broken phrase perchance to a worse meaning than it held.

"Into this depth of the dismal shell does any one ever descend from the first grade who has for penalty only hope cut off?"[1] This question I put, and he answered me, "Seldom it happens that any one of us maketh the journey on which I am going. It is true that another time I was conjured down here by that cruel Erichtho who was wont to call back shades into their bodies. Short while had my flesh been bare of me, when she made me enter within that wall in order to drag out for her a spirit from the circle of Judas. That is the lowest place, and the darkest, and the farthest from the Heaven that encircles all. Well do I know the road: therefore assure thyself. This marsh which breathes out the great stench girds round about the woeful city wherein now we cannot enter without anger."

[1] Dante asks for assurance that Virgil, whose station is in Limbo, "the first grade," knows the way.

And more he said, but I hold it not in mind because my eye had wholly attracted me toward the high tower with the ruddy summit, where in an instant were uprisen suddenly three infernal furies, stained with blood, who had the limbs of women and their action, and were girt with greenest hydras. Little serpents and cerastes they had for hair, wherewith their savage brows were bound.

And he, who well knew the handmaids of the queen of the eternal lamentation, said to me, "Behold the fell Erinnyes; this is Megaera on the left side, she who

weeps on the right is Alecto, Tisiphone is in the middle," and therewith he was silent.

With her nails each was tearing her breast, they beat themselves with their hands, and cried out so loud that I pressed close to the Poet through dread. "Let Medusa come, so we will make him of stone," they all said, looking down. "Ill was it we avenged not on Theseus his assault."

"Turn thy back, and keep thy sight closed, for if the Gorgon show herself, and thou shouldest see her, no return upward would there ever be." Thus said the Master, and he himself turned me, and did not so trust to my hands that with his own he did not also blindfold me.

O ye who have sound understanding, regard the doctrine that is hidden under the veil of the strange verses.

And already was coming across the turbid waves a tumult of a sound full of terror at which both the shores trembled. Not otherwise it was than of a wind, impetuous through the opposing heats, that strikes the forest, and without any stay shatters the branches, beats down and carries them away; forward, laden with dust, it goes superb, and makes the wild beasts and the shepherds fly.

My eyes he loosed, and said, "Now direct the nerve of sight across the ancient scum, there yonder where that fume is most bitter."

As frogs before the hostile snake all scatter through the water, till each huddles on the ground, I saw more than a thousand destroyed souls flying thus before one, who at the ford was passing over the Styx with dry feet. From his face he removed that thick air, waving his left hand oft before him, and only with that trouble seemed he weary. Well I perceived that he was sent from Heaven, and I turned me to the Master, and he made sign that I should stand quiet and bow down unto him. Ah, how full of disdain he seemed to me! He reached the gate and with a little rod he opened it, for there was no withstanding.

"O outcasts from Heaven, folk despised," began he upon the horrible threshold, "wherefore is this overweening harbored in you? Why do ye kick against that will from which its end can never be cut short, and which many a time hath increased your grief? What avails it to butt against the fates? Your Cerberus, if ye remember well, still bears his chin and his throat peeled for that." Then he turned back upon the filthy road and said no word to us, but wore the semblance of a man whom other care constrains and stings, than that of him who is before him.

And we moved our feet toward the city, confident after his holy words. Within we entered without any strife, and I, who had desire to observe the condition which such a stronghold locks in, when I was within, sent my eyes

round about; and I see on every hand a great plain full of woe and of cruel torment.

As at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates, as at Pola, near the Quarnaro that shuts in Italy and bathes its borders, sepulchres make all the place uneven; so did they here on every side, saving that the manner was more bitter here; for among the tombs flames were scattered, by which they were so intensely kindled that no art requires iron more so. All their lids were lifted; and such dire laments were issuing forth from them as truly seemed of wretches and of sufferers.

And I, “Master, who are these folk that, buried within those coffers, make themselves heard with their woeful sighs?” And he to me, “Here are the heresiarchs with their followers of every sect, and the tombs are much more laden than thou thinkest. Like with like is buried here, and the monuments are more and less hot.”

And when he to the right hand had turned, we passed between the torments and the high battlements.

CANTO X.

The Sixth Circle: Heresiarchs. — Farinata degli Uberti.-Cavalcante Cavalcanti. — Frederick II.

Now along a narrow path between the wall of the city and the torments my Master goeth on, and I behind his shoulders.

"O Virtue supreme," I began, "that through the impious circles turnest me, according to thy pleasure, speak to me and satisfy my desires. The folk that are lying in the sepulchres, can they be seen? All the lids are now lifted, and no one keepeth guard." And he to me, "All shall be locked in when from Jehoshaphat they shall here return with the bodies which they have left on earth. Upon this side Epicurus with all his followers, who make the soul mortal with the body, have their burial place. Therefore as to the demand that thou makest of me, thou shalt soon be satisfied here within; and also as to the desire concerning which thou art silent to me." And I, "Good Leader, I hold not my heart hidden from thee except in order to speak little; and not only now to that hast thou disposed me."

"O Tuscan, who through the city of fire alive art going, speaking thus modestly, may it please thee to stop in this place. Thy speech makes manifest that thou art native of that noble fatherland to which perchance I was too molestful." Suddenly this sound issued from one of the coffers, wherefore I drew, in fear, a little nearer to my Leader. And he said to me, "Turn, what dost thou? Behold Farinata who hath uprisen; thou shalt see him all from the girdle up."

I had already fixed my face on his, and he straightened himself up with breast and front as though he had Hell in great scorn. And the bold and ready hands of my Leader pushed me among the sepulchres to him, saying, "Let thy words be choice."

When I was at the foot of his tomb, he looked at me a little, and then, as though disdainful, asked me, "Who were thy ancestors?" I, who was desirous to obey, concealed them not, but disclosed them all to him; whereon he raised his brows a little up, then said, "Fiercely were they adverse to me, and to my fathers, and to my party, so that twice I scattered them." [1] "If they were driven out, they returned from every side," replied I to him, "both one and the other time, but yours have not learned well that art."

[1] Dante's ancestors were Guelphs.

Then there arose, to view uncovered down to the chin, a shade at the side of this one; I think that it had risen on its knees. Round about me it looked, as if it had desire to see if another were with me, but when its expectancy was quite extinct, weeping it said, “If through this blind dungeon thou goest through loftiness of genius, my son, where is he? and why is he not with thee?” And I to him, “Of myself I come not; he who waits yonder leads me through here, whom perchance your Guido held in scorn.”[1]

[1] Guido Cavalcanti was charged with the same sin of unbelief as his father. Dante regards this as a sin specially contrary to right reason, typified by Virgil.

His words and the mode of the punishment had already read to me the name of this one, wherefore my answer was so full.

Suddenly straightening up, he cried, “How didst thou say, ‘he held’? lives he not still? doth not the sweet light strike his eyes?” When he took note of some delay that I made before answering, he fell again supine, and forth appeared no more.

But that other magnanimous one, at whose instance I had stayed, changed not aspect, nor moved his neck, nor bent his side. “And if,” he said, continuing his first words, “they have ill learned that art, it torments me more than this bed. But the face of the lady who ruleth here will not be rekindled fifty times ere thou shalt know how much that art weighs. And, so mayest thou return unto the sweet world, tell me wherefore is that people so pitiless against my race in its every law?” Then I to him, “The rout and the great carnage that colored the Arbia red cause such orison to be made in our temple.” After he had, sighing, shaken his head, “In that I was not alone,” he said, “nor surely without cause would I have moved with the rest; but I was alone, — there [1] where it was agreed by every one to lay Florence waste, — he who defended her with open face.” “Ah! so hereafter may your seed repose,” I prayed to him, “loose for me that knot, which here has entangled my judgment. It seems, if I rightly hear, that ye foresee that which time is bringing with him, and as to the present have another way.” “We see,” he said, “like those who have feeble light, the things that are far from us, so much still shineth on us the supreme Leader; when they draw near, or are, our intelligence is all vain, and, if some one report not to us, we know nothing of your human state. Therefore thou canst comprehend that our knowledge will be utterly dead from that moment when the gate of the future shall he closed.” Then, as compunctious for my fault I said, “Now wilt thou therefore tell that fallen one that his son is still conjoined with the living, and if just now I was dumb to answer, make him know that I was so because I was still thinking in that error which you have solved for me.” [2]

[1] At Empoli, in 1260, after the defeat of the Florentine Guelphs at Montaperti on the Arbia.

[2] Guido Cavalcanti died in August, 1300; his death, being near at hand at the time of Dante's journey, was not known to his father.

And now my Master was calling me back, wherefore I prayed the spirit more hastily that he would tell me who was with him. He said to me, "Here with more than a thousand do I lie; here within is the second Frederick and the Cardinal,[1] and of the others I am silent."

[1] Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, a fierce Ghibelline, who was reported as saying, "If there be a soul I have lost it for the Ghibellines."

Thereon he hid himself; and I toward the ancient Poet turned my steps, reflecting on that speech which seemed hostile to me. He moved on, and then, thus going, he said to me, "Why art thou so distraught?" And I satisfied his demand. "Let thy memory preserve that which thou hast heard against thyself," commanded me that Sage, "and now attend to this," and he raised his finger. "When thou shalt be in presence of the sweet radiance of her whose beautiful eye sees everything, from her thou shalt learn the journey of thy life." Then to the left he turned his step.

We left the wall, and went toward the middle by a path which strikes into a valley that even up there its stench made displeasing.

CANTO XI.

The Sixth Circle: Heretics. — Tomb of Pope Anastasins. — Discourse of Virgil on the divisions of the lower Hell.

Upon the edge of a high bank formed by great rocks broken in a circle, we came above a more cruel pen. And here, because of the horrible excess of the stench that the deep abyss throws out, we drew aside behind the lid of a great tomb, whereon I saw an inscription which said, “Pope Anastasius I hold, he whom Photinus drew from the right way.”

“Our descent must needs be slow so that the sense may first accustom itself a little to the dismal blast, and then will be no heed of it.” Thus the Master, and I said to him, “Some compensation do thou find that the time pass not lost.” And be, “Behold, I am thinking of that. My son, within these rocks,” he began to say, “are three circlets from grade to grade like those thou leavest. All are full of accursed spirits; but, in order that hereafter sight only may suffice thee, hear how and wherefore they are in constraint.

“Of every malice that wins hate in heaven injury is the end, and every such end afflicts others either by force or by fraud. But because fraud is the peculiar sin of man, it most displeaseth God; and therefore the fraudulent are the lower, and more woe assails them.

“The first circle[1] is wholly of the violent; but because violence can be done to three persons, in three rounds it is divided and constructed. Unto God, unto one’s self, unto one’s neighbor may violence be done; I mean unto them and unto their belongings, as thou shalt hear in plain discourse. By violence death and grievous wounds are inflicted on one’s neighbor; and on his substance ruins, burnings, and harmful robberies. Wherefore homicides, and every one who smites wrongfully, devastators and freebooters, all of them the first round torments, in various troops.

[1] The first circle below, the seventh in the order of Hell.

“Man may lay violent hands upon himself and on his goods; and, therefore, in the second round must needs repent without avail whoever deprives himself of your world, gambles away and squanders his property, and laments there where he ought to be joyous.[2]

[2] Laments on earth because of violence done to what should have made him happy.

“Violence may be done to the Deity, by denying and blaspheming Him in heart, and despising nature and His bounty: and therefore the smallest round

seals with its signet both Sodom and Cahors, and him who despising God speaks from his heart.

"Fraud, by which every conscience is bitten, man may practice on one that confides in him, or on one that owns no confidence. This latter mode seemeth to destroy only the bond of love that nature makes; wherefore in the second circle[1] nestle hypocrisy, flatteries, and sorcerers, falsity, robbery, and simony, panders, barrators, and such like filth.

[1] The second circle below, the eighth in the order of Hell.

"By the other mode that love is forgotten which nature makes, and also that which is thereafter added, whereby special confidence is created. Hence, in the smallest circle, where is the centre of the universe, on which Dis sits, whoso betrays is consumed forever."

And I, "Master, full clearly doth thy discourse proceed, and full well divides this pit, and the people that possess it; but, tell me, they of the fat marsh, and they whom the wind drives, and they whom the rain beats, and they who encounter with such sharp tongues, why are they not punished within the ruddy city if God be wroth with them? and if he be not so, why are they in such plight?"

And he said to me, "Wherefore so wanders thine understanding beyond its wont? or thy mind, where else is it gazing? Dost thou not remember those words with which thine Ethics treats in full of the three dispositions that Heaven abides not; in continence, malice, and mad bestiality, and how incontinence less offends God, and incurs less blame? [1] If thou considerest well this doctrine, and bringest to mind who are those that up above, outside,[2] suffer punishment, thou wilt see clearly why from these felons they are divided, and why less wroth the divine vengeance hammers them."

[1] Aristotle, Ethics, vii. 1.

[2] Outside the walls of the city of Dis.

"O Sun that healest every troubled vision, thou dost content me so, when thou explainest, that doubt, not less than knowledge, pleaseth me; yet return a little back," said I, "there where thou saidst that usury offends the Divine Goodness, and loose the knot."

"Philosophy," he said to me, "points out to him who understands it, not only in one part alone, how Nature takes her course from the Divine Intellect and from its art. And if thou note thy Physics [1] well thou wilt find after not many pages that your art follows her so far as it can, as the disciple does the master, so that your art is as it were grandchild of God. By means of these two, if thou

bringest to mind Genesis at its beginning, it behoves mankind to obtain their livelihood and to thrive. But because the usurer takes another course, he despises Nature in herself, and in her follower, since upon other thing he sets his hope. But follow me now, for to go on pleaseth me; for the Fishes are gliding on the horizon, and the Wain lies quite over Corus,[2] and far yonder is the way down the cliff."

[1] Aristotle, Physics, ii. 2.

[2] The time indicated is about 4, or from 4 to 5 A.M. Corus, the name of the north-west wind, here stands for that quarter of the heavens.

CANTO XII.

First round of the Seventh Circle; those who do violence to others; Tyrants and Homicides. — The Minotaur. — The Centaurs. — Chiron. — Nessus. — The River of Boiling Blood, and the Sinners in it.

The place where we came to descend the bank was rugged, and, because of what was there besides, such that every eye would be shy of it.

As is that ruin which, on this side of Trent, struck the Adige on its flank, either by earthquake or by failure of support, — for from the top of the mountain whence it moved, to the plain, the cliff has so fallen down that it might give a path to one who was above, — so was the descent of that ravine. And on the edge of the broken chasm lay stretched out the infamy of Crete, that was conceived in the false cow. And when he saw us he bit himself even as one whom wrath rends inwardly. My Sage cried out toward him, “Perchance thou believest that here is the Duke of Athens who up in the world brought death to thee? Get thee gone, beast, for this one comes not instructed by thy sister, but he goes to behold your punishments.”

As a bull that breaks away at the instant he has now received his mortal stroke, and cannot go, but plunges hither and thither, the Minotaur I saw do the like.

And that wary one cried out, “Run to the pass; while he is raging it is well that thou descend.” So we took our way down over the discharge of those stones, which often moved under my feet because of the novel burden.

I was going along thinking, and he said, “Thou thinkest perhaps on this ruin which is guarded by that bestial with which I just now quenched. Now would I have thee know that the other time when I descended hither into the nether hell, this cliff had not yet fallen. But in truth, if I discern clearly, a little ere He came, who levied the great spoil on Dis from the supernal circle, in all its parts the deep foul valley trembled so that I thought the universe had felt the love by which, as some believe, oft times the world has been converted into chaos:[1] and, at that moment, this ancient cliff here and elsewhere made this downfall. But fix thine eyes below, for the river of blood is near, in which boils whoso doth harm to others by violence.”

[1] Empedocles taught, as Dante may have learned from Aristotle, that Love and Hate were the forces by which the elements of which the world is composed were united and dissociated. The effort of Love was to draw all things into a simple perfect sphere, by which the common order of the world would be brought to chaos.

Oh blind cupidity, both guilty and mad, that so spurs us in the brief life, and then, in the eternal, steeps us so ill!

I saw a broad ditch, bent in an arc, like one that embraces all the plain; according as my Guide had said. And between the foot of the bank and it, in a file were running Centaurs armed with arrows, as they were wont in the world to go to the chase. Seeing us descending, all stopped, and from the troop three detached themselves, with bows and arrows first selected. And one shouted from afar, “To what torment are ye coming, ye who descend the slope? Tell it from there; if not, I draw the bow.” My Master said, “We will make answer unto Chiron near you there: ill was it that thy will was ever thus hasty.”

Then he touched me, and said, “That is Nessus, who died for the beautiful Dejanira, and he himself wrought vengeance for himself; and that one in the middle, who is gazing on his breast, is the great Chiron who nurtured Achilles. That other is Pholus, who was so full of wrath. Round about the ditch they go by thousands shooting with their arrows what soul lifts itself from the blood more than its guilt has allotted it.”

We drew near to those fleet wild beasts. Chiron took a shaft, and with the notch put his beard backward upon his jaw. When he had uncovered his great mouth he said to his companions, “Are ye aware that the one behind moves what he touches? so are not wont to do the feet of the dead.” And my good Leader, who was now at his breast, where the two natures are conjoined, replied, “Truly he is alive, and thus all alone it behoves me to show him the dark valley: necessity brings him hither and not delight. One withdrew from singing alleluiah who committed unto me this new office; he is no robber, nor I a thievish spirit. But, by that power through which I move my steps along so savage a road, give to us one of thine, to whom we may be close, that he may show us where the ford is, and may carry this one on his back, for he is not a spirit who can go through the air.”

Chiron turned upon his right breast, and said to Nessus, “Turn, and guide them thus, and if another troop encounter you, make it give way.”

We moved on with the trusty escort along the edge of the crimson boiling, in which the boiled were making loud shrieks. I saw folk under it up to the brow, and the great Centaur said, “These are tyrants who gave themselves to blood and pillage. Here they weep their pitiless offenses: here is Alexander, and cruel Dionysius who caused Sicily to have woeful years. And that front which hath such black hair is Azzolino, and that other who is blond is Opizzo of Esti, who in truth was slain by his stepson up there in the world.”

Then I turned me to the Poet, and he said, “Let him now be first, and I second.” A little further on the Centaur stopped above some folk who far as the throat were seen to issue from that boiling stream. He showed to us at one side a solitary shade, and said, “He cleft, in the bosom of God, the heart that still is

honored on the Thames."[1] Then I saw folk, who out of the stream held their head, and even all their chest; and of these I recognized many. Thus ever more and more shallow became that blood, until it cooked only the feet: and here was our passage of the foss.

[1] In 1271, Prince Henry, son of Richard of Cornwall, was stabbed during the mass, in a church at Viterbo, by Guy of Montfort, to avenge the death of his father, Simon, Earl of Leicester, in 1261. The heart of the young Prince was placed in a golden cup, as Villani (vii. 39) reports, on a column, at the head of a bridge in London.

"Even as on this side, thou seest that the boiling stream ever diminishes," said the Centaur, "I would have thee believe that on this other its bed sinks more and more, until it comes round again where it behoves that tyranny should groan. The divine justice here pierces that Attila who was a scourge on earth, and Pyrrhus and Sextus; and forever milks the tears that with the boiling it unlocks from Rinier of Corneto, and from Rinier Pazzo, who upon the highways made such warfare."

Then he turned back and repassed the ford.

CANTO XIII.

Second round of the Seventh Circle: of those who have done violence to themselves and to their goods. — The Wood of Self-murderers. — The Harpies. — Pier delle Vigne. — Lano of Siena and others.

Nessus had not yet reached the yonder bank when we set forward through a wood which was marked by no path. Not green leaves but of a dusky color, not smooth boughs but knotty and gnarled, not fruits were there but thorns with poison. Those savage beasts that hold in hate the tilled places between Cecina and Corneto have no thickets so rough or so dense.

Here the foul Harpies make their nests, who chased the Trojans from the Strophades with dismal announcement of future calamity. They have broad wings, and human necks and faces, feet with claws, and a great feathered belly. They make lament upon the strange trees.

And the good Master, “Before thou enter farther know that thou art in the second round,” he began to say to me, “and wilt be, till thou shalt come unto the horrible sand. Therefore look well around, and so thou shalt see things that would take credence from my speech.”[1]

[1] Things which if told would seem incredible.

I heard wailings uttered on every side, and I saw no one who might make them, wherefore, I, all bewildered, stopped. I believe that he believed that I believed that all these voices issued amid those stumps from people who because of us had hidden themselves.

Therefore said the Master, “If thou break off a twig from one of these plants, the thoughts thou hast will all be cut short.” Then I stretched my hand a little forward and plucked a branchlet from a great thorn-bush, and its trunk cried out, “Why dost thou rend me?” When it had become dark with blood it began again to cry, “Why dost thou tear me? hast thou not any spirit of pity? Men we were, and now we are become stocks; truly thy hand ought to be more pitiful had we been the souls of serpents.”

As from a green log that is burning at one of its ends, and from the other drips, and hisses with the air that is escaping, so from that broken splinter came out words and blood together; whereon I let the tip fall, and stood like a man who is afraid.

“If he had been able to believe before,” replied my Sage, “O wounded soul, what he has seen only in my verse,[1] he would not upon thee have stretched his hand. But the incredible thing made me prompt him to an act which grieves my

very self. But tell him who thou wast, so that, by way of some amends, he may refresh thy fame in the world above, whereto it is allowed him to return."

[1] In the story of Polydorus, in the third book of the Aeneid.

And the trunk, "So with sweet speech dost thou allure me, that I cannot be silent, and may it not displease you, that I am enticed to speak a little. I am he who held both the keys of the heart of Frederick, and who turned them, locking and unlocking so softly, that from his confidence I kept almost every one.[1] Fidelity so great I bore to the glorious office, that I lost slumber and strength thereby. The harlot,[2] that never from the abode of Caear turned her strumpet eyes, — the common death and vice of courts, — inflamed all minds against me, and they, inflamed, did so inflame Augustus that my glad honors turned to dismal sorrows. My mind, in scornful temper thinking to escape scorn by death, made me unjust toward my just self. By the strange roots of this tree I swear to you, that I never broke faith unto my lord who was so worthy of honor. And if one of you returneth to the world, let him comfort my memory that yet lies prostrate from the blow that envy gave it."

[1] The spirit who speaks is Pier delle Vigne, the Chancellor of Frederick II.; of low birth, he rose to the first place in the state; he was one of the earliest writers of Italian verse. Dante has placed his master as well as him in Hell. See Canto X.

[3] Envie ys lavendere of the court alway;
For she ne parteth neither nyght ne day
Out of the house of Cesar, thus saith Daunte.
Legende of Goode Women, 358.60.

A while he paused, and then, "Since he is silent," said the Poet to me, "lose not the hour, but speak and ask of him, if more pleaseth thee." Whereon I to him, "Do thou ask him further of what thou thinkest may satisfy me, for I cannot, such pity fills my heart."

Therefore he began again, "So may this man do for thee freely what thy speech prays, spirit incarcerate, still be pleased to tell us how the soul is bound within these knots, and tell us, if thou canst, if any from such limbs is ever loosed."

Then the trunk puffed strongly, and soon that wind was changed into this voice: "Briefly shall ye be answered. When the ferocious soul departeth from the body wherefrom itself hath torn itself, Minos sends it to the seventh gulf. It falls into the wood, and no part is chosen for it, but where fortune flings it, there it takes root like a grain of spelt; it springs up in a shoot and to a wild plant. The Harpies, feeding then upon its leaves, give pain, and to the pain a window.[1] Like the rest we shall go for our spoils,[2] but not, forsooth, that any one may revest himself with them, for it is not just to have that of which one deprives himself.

Hither shall we drag them, and through the melancholy wood shall our bodies be suspended, each on the thorn-tree of his molested shade."

[1] The tearing of the leaves gives an outlet to the woe.

[2] Our bodies, at the Last Judgment.

We were still attentive to the trunk, believing that it might wish to say more to us, when we were surprised by an uproar, as one who perceives the wild boar and the chase coming toward his stand and hears the Feasts and the branches crashing. And behold two on the left hand, naked and scratched, flying so violently that they broke all the limbs of the wood. The one in front was shouting, "Now, help, help, Death!" and the other, who seemed to himself too slow, "Lano, thy legs were not so nimble at the jousts of the Toppo:"[1] and when perhaps his breath was failing, of himself and of a bush he made a group. Behind them the wood was full of black bitches, ravenous and running like greyhounds that have been unleashed. On him that had squatted they set their teeth and tore him to pieces, bit by bit, then carried off his woeful limbs.

[1] Lano was slain in flight at the defeat of the Sienese by the Aretines, near the Pieve del Toppo, in 1280. He and Jacomo were notorious prodigals.

My Guide then took me by the hand, and led me to the bush, which was weeping through its bleeding breaks in vain. "O Jacomo of Sant' Andrea," it was saying, "what hath it vantaged thee to make of me a screen? What blame have I for thy wicked life?" When the Master had stopped beside it, he said, "Who wast thou, who through so many wounds blowest forth with blood thy woeful speech?" And he to us, "O souls who art arrived to see the shameful ravage that hath thus disjoined my leaves from me, collect them at the foot of the wretched bush. I was of the city which for the Baptist changed her first patron;[1] wherefore will he always make her sorrowful with his art. And were it not that at the passage of the Arno some semblance of him yet remains, those citizens who afterwards rebuilt it upon the ashes that were left by Attila[2] would have labored in vain. I made a gibbet for myself of my own dwelling."

[1] The first patron of florence was Mars; a fragment of a statue of whom stood till 1333 on the Ponte Vecchio.

[2] It was not Attila, but Totila, who in 542 besieged Florence, and, according to false popular tradition, burned it. The names and personages were frequently confounded in the Dark Ages.

CANTO XIV.

Third round of the Seventh Circle of those who have done violence to God. — The Burning Sand. — Capaneus. — Figure of the Old Man in Crete. — The Rivers of Hell.

Because the charity of my native place constrained me, I gathered up the scattered leaves and gave them back to him who was already hoarse.

Then we came to the confine, where the second round is divided from the third, and where is seen a horrible mode of justice.

To make clearly manifest the new things, I say that we had reached a plain which from its bed removeth every plant. The woeful wood is a garland round about it, even as the dismal foss to that. Here, on the very edge, we stayed our steps. The floor was a dry and dense sand, not made in other fashion than that which of old was trodden by the feet of Cato.

O vengeance of God, how much thou oughtest to be feared by every one who readeth that which was manifest unto mine eyes!

Of naked souls I saw many flocks, that were all weeping very miserably, and diverse law seemed imposed upon them. Some folk were lying supine on the ground, some were seated all crouched up, and others were going about continually. Those who were going around were far the more, and those the fewer who were lying down under the torment, but they had their tongues more loose for wailing.

Over all the sand, with a slow falling, were raining down dilated flakes of fire, as of snow on alps without a wind. As the flames which Alexander in those hot parts of India saw falling upon his host, solid to the ground, wherefore he took care to trample the soil by his troops, because the vapor was better extinguished while it was single; so was descending the eternal glow whereby the sand was kindled, like tinder beneath the steel, for doubling of the dole. Without repose was ever the dance of the wretched hands, now there, now here, brushing from them the fresh burning.

I began, “Master, thou that overcomest everything, except the obdurate demons, who at the entrance of the gate came out against us, who is that great one that seemeth not to heed the fire, and lies scornful and contorted, so that the rain seems not to ripen him?” And that same one who had perceived that I was asking my Leader about him, cried out, “Such as I was alive, such am I dead. Though Jove weary his smith, from whom in wrath he took the sharp thunderbolt wherewith on my last day I was smitten, or though he weary the others, turn by turn, in Mongibello at the black forge, crying, ‘Good Vulcan, help, help!’ even

as he did at the fight of Phlegra, and should hurl on me with all his might, thereby he should not have glad vengeance."

Then my Leader spoke with force so great that I had not heard him so loud, "O Capaneus, in that thy pride is not quenched, art thou the more punished; no torture save thine own rage would be a pain adequate to thy fury."

Then he turned round to me with better look, saying, "He was one of the Seven Kings that besieged Thebes, and he held, and it appears that he holds God in disdain, and little it appears that he prizes Him; but as I said to him, his own despites are very due adornments for his breast. Now come on behind me, and take heed withal, not to set thy feet upon the burning sand, but keep them always close unto the wood."

Silent we came to where spirts forth from the wood a little streamlet, the redness of which still makes me shudder. As from the Bulicame issues a brooklet, which then the sinful women share among them, so this down across the sand went along.[1] Its bed and both its sloping banks were made of stone, and the margins on the side, whereby I perceived that the crossing[2] was there.

[1] The Bulicame, a hot spring near Viterbo, much frequented as a bath, the use of a portion of which was assigned to "sinful women."

[2] The crossing of the breadth of the round of burning sand, on the way inward toward the next circle.

"Among all else that I have shown to thee, since we entered through the gate whose threshold is barred to no one, nothing has been discerned by thine eyes so notable as is the present stream which deadens all the flamelets upon it." These words were of my Leader, wherefore I prayed him, that he should give me largess of the food for which he had given me largess of desire.

"In mid sea sits a wasted land," said he then, "which is named Crete, under whose king the world of old was chaste. A mountain is there that of old was glad with waters and with leaves, which is called Ida; now it is desert, like a thing outworn. Rhea chose it of old for the trusty cradle of her little son, and to conceal him better when he cried had shoutings made there. Within the mountain stands erect a great old man, who holds his shoulders turned towards Damietta, and looks at Rome as if his mirror. His head is formed of fine gold, and pure silver are his arms and breast; then he is of brass far as to the fork. From there downward he is all of chosen iron, save that his right foot is of baked clay, and he stands erect on that more than on the other.[1] Every part except the gold is cleft with a fissure that trickles tears, which collected perforate that cavern. Their course falls from rock to rock into this valley; they form Acheron, Styx, and Phlegethon; then it goes down through this narrow channel far as where there is no more descending. They form Cocytus, and what that pool is, thou shalt see; therefore here is it not told."

[1] This image is taken directly from the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel ii. 31-33). It is the type of the ages of tradition and history, with its back to the past, its face toward Rome, — the seat of the Empire and of the Church. The tears of the sin and suffering of the generations of man form the rivers of Hell.

And I to him, “If the present rill floweth down thus from our world, why doth it appear to us only at this rim?”

And he to me, “Thou knowest that the place is round, and though thou art come far, ever to the left descending toward the bottom, not yet hast thou turned through the whole circle; wherefore if a new thing appears to us, it ought not to bring wonder to thy face.”

And I again, “Master, where are Phlegethon and Lethe found, for of the one thou art silent, and of the other thou sayest that it is formed by this rain?”

“In all thy questions surely thou pleasest me,” he answered, “but the boiling of the red water ought truly to solve one that thou askest. Lethe thou shalt see, but outside of this ditch, there where souls go to lave themselves when sin repented of is taken away.” Then he said, “Now it is time to depart from the wood; take heed that thou come behind me; the margins afford way, for they are not burning, and above them all the vapor is extinguished.”

CANTO XV.

Third round of the Seventh Circle: of those who have done violence to Nature. — Brunetto Latini. — Prophecies of misfortune to Dante.

Now one of the hard margins bears us on, and the fume of the brook overshadows so that it saves the water and the banks from the fire. As the Flemings, between Wissant and Bruges, fearing the flood that is blown in upon them, make the dyke whereby the sea is routed; and as the Paduans along the Brenta, in order to defend their towns and castles, ere Chiarentana[1] feel the heat, — in such like were these made, though neither so high nor so thick had the master, whoever he was, made them.

[1] The mountain range north of the Brenta, by the floods from which the river is swollen in the spring.

We were now so remote from the wood that I could not have seen where it was though I had turned me round to look, when we encountered a troop of souls which was coming along by the bank, and each of them was looking at us, as at eve one is wont to look at another under the new moon, and they so sharpened their brows toward us as the old tailor does on the needle's eye.

Thus gazed at by that company, I was recognized by one who took me by the hem, and cried out, "What a marvel!" And when he stretched out his arm to me, I fixed my eyes on his baked aspect so that his scorched visage prevented not my mind from recognizing him; and bending down my own to his face, I answered, "Are you here, Sir Brunetto?"[1] And he, "O my son, let it not displease thee if Brunetto Latini turn a little back with thee, and let the train go on." I said to him, "With all my power I pray this of you, and if you will that I seat myself with you I will do so, if it pleaseth this one, for I go with him." "O son," said he, "whoever of this herd stops for an instant lies then a hundred years without fanning himself when the fire smites him; therefore go onward, I will come at thy skirts, and then I will rejoin my band which goeth weeping its eternal sufferings."

[1] Brunetto Latini, one of the most learned and able Florentines of the thirteenth century. He was banished with the other chiefs of the Guelph party, after the battle of Montaperti, in 1260, and went to France, where he resided for many years. After his return to Florence he became Secretary of the Commune, and he was the master of Dante and Guido Cavalcanti. His principal literary work was Li Livres dou Tresor, written in French, an interesting compend of the omne scibile. He died in 1290. Dante uses the plural "you" in addressing him, as a sign of respect.

I dared not descend from the road to go level with him, but I held my head bowed like one who goes reverently. He began, "What fortune, or destiny, ere the last day, brings thee down here? and who is this that shows the road?"

“There above, in the clear life,” I answered him, “I lost myself in a valley, before my time was full. Only yester morn I turned my back on it; this one[1] appeared to me as I was returning to it, and he is leading me homeward along this path.”

[1] Dante never speaks Virgil’s name in Hell.

And he to me: “If thou follow thy star, thou canst not miss the glorious port, if, in the beautiful life, I discerned aright. And if I had not so untimely died, seeing heaven so benignant unto thee I would have given cheer unto thy work. But that ungrateful populace malign which descended from Fiesole of old,[1] and smacks yet of the mountain and the rock, will hate thee because of thy good deeds; and this is right, for among the bitter sorb trees it is not fitting the sweet fig should bear fruit. Old report in the world calls them blind; it is a people avaricious, envious, and proud; from their customs take heed that thou keep thyself clean. Thy fortune reserves such honor for thee that one party and the other shall hunger for thee; but far from the goat shall be the grass. Let the Fiesolan beasts make litter of themselves, and touch not the plant, if any spring still upon their dungheap, in which may live again the holy seed of those Romans who remained there when it became the nest of so much malice.”

[1] After his flight from Rome Catiline betook himself to Faesulae (Fiesole), and here for a time held out against the Roman forces. The popular tradition ran that, after his defeat, Faesulae was destroyed, and its people, together with a colony from Rome, made a settlement on the banks of the Arno, below the mountain on which Faesulae had stood. The new town was named Fiora, siccome fosse in fiore edificata, “as though built among flowers,” but afterwards was called Fiorenza, or Florence. See G. Villani, Cronica, I. xxxi.-xxxviii.

“If all my entreaty were fulfilled,” replied I to him, “you would not yet be placed in banishment from human nature; for in my mind is fixed, and now fills my heart, the dear, good, paternal image of you, when in the world hour by hour you taught me how man makes himself eternal and in what gratitude I hold it, so long as I live, it behoves that on my tongue should be discerned. That which you tell me of my course I write, and reserve it to be glossed with other text,[1] by a Lady, who will know how, if I attain to her. Thus much would I have manifest to you: if only that my conscience chide me not, for Fortune, as she will, I am ready. Such earnest is not strange unto my ears; therefore let Fortune turn her wheel as pleases her, and the churl his mattock.”[2]

[1] The prophecy by Ciacco of the fall of Dante’s party, Canto vi., and that by Farinata of Dante’s exile, Canto x., which Virgil had told should be made clear to him by Beatrice.

[2] The churl of Fiesole.

My Master then upon his right side turned himself back, and looked at me; then said, “He listens well who notes it.”

Not the less for this do I go on speaking with Sir Brunetto, and I ask, who are his most known and most eminent companions. And he to me, “To know of some is good, of the others silence will be laudable for us, for the time would be short for so much speech. In brief, know that all were clerks, and great men of letters, and of great fame, defiled in the world with one same sin. Priscian goes along with that disconsolate crowd, and Francesco of Accorso;[1] and thou mightest also have seen, hadst thou had desire of such scurf, him who by the Servant of Servants was translated from Arno to Bacchiglione, where he left his ill-strained nerves.[2] Of more would I tell, but the going on and the speech cannot be longer, for I see yonder a new cloud rising from the sand. Folk come with whom I must not be. Let my Tesoro be commended to thee, in which I still am living, and more I ask not.”

[1] Priscian, the famous grammarian of the sixth century; Francis of Accorso, a jurist of great repute, who taught at Oxford and at Bologna, and died in 1294.

[2] Andrea de Mozzi, bishop of Florence, translated by Boniface VIII. to Viceuza, near which the Bacchiglione runs. He died in 1296.

Then he turned back, and seemed of those who run at Verona for the green cloth[1] across the plain, and of these he seemed the one that wins, and not he that loses.

[1] The prize in the annual races at Verona.

CANTO XVI.

Third round of the Seventh Circle: of those who have done violence to Nature. — Guido Guerra, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi and Jacopo Rusticucci. — The roar of Phlegethon as it pours downward. — The cord thrown into the abyss.

Now was I in a place where the resounding of the water that was falling into the next circle was heard, like that hum which the beehives make, when three shades together separated themselves, running, from a troop that was passing under the rain of the bitter torment. They came toward us, and each cried out, “Stop thou, that by thy garb seemest to us to be one from our wicked city!”

Ah me! what wounds I saw upon their limbs, recent and old, burnt in by the flames. Still it grieves me for them but to remember it.

To their cries my Teacher gave heed; he turned his face toward me, and “Now wait,” he said; “to these one should be courteous, and were it not for the fire that the nature of the place shoots out, I should say that haste better befitted thee than them.”

They began again, when we stopped, the old verse, and when they had reached us they made a wheel of themselves all three. As champions naked and oiled are wont to do, watching their hold and their vantage, before they come to blows and thrusts, thus, wheeling, each directed his face on me, so that his neck in contrary direction to his feet was making continuous journey.

“Ah! if the misery of this shifting sand bring us and our prayers into contempt,” began one, “and our darkened and blistered aspect, let our fame incline thy mind to tell us who thou art, that so securely plantest thy living feet in Hell. He whose tracks thou seest me trample, though he go naked and singed, was of greater state than thou thinkest. Grandson he was of the good Gualdrada; his name was Guidoguerra, and in his life he did much with counsel, and with the sword. The other who treads the sand behind me is Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, whose fame should be welcome in the world above. And I, who am set with them on the cross, was Jacopo Rusticucci,[1] and surely my savage wife more than aught else injures.

[1] Concerning Tegghiaio and Rusticucci Dante had enquired of Ciacco, Canto vi. They and Guido Guerra were illustrious citizens of Florence in the thirteenth century. Their deeds are recorded by Villani and Ricordano Malespini. The good Gualdrada, famed for her beauty and her modesty, was the daughter of Messer Bellincione Berti, referred to in Cantos w. and wi. of Paradise as one of the early worthies of the city. See O. Villani, Cronica. V. xxxvii.

If I could have been sheltered from the fire I would have cast myself below among them, and I think that the Teacher would have permitted it; but because I should have been scorched and baked, fear overcame my good will that made me

greedy to embrace them. Then I began: “Not contempt, but grief, did your condition fix within me, so that slowly will it be all divested, soon as this my Lord said words to me by which I understood that such folk as ye are might be coming. Of your city I am; and always your deeds and honored names have I retraced and heard with affection. I leave the gall and go for the sweet fruits promised me by my veracious Leader; but far as the centre needs must I first descend.”

“So may thy soul long direct thy limbs,” replied he then, “and so may thy fame shine after thee, say if courtesy and valor abide in our city as they were wont, or if they have quite gone forth from it? For Guglielmo Borsiere,[1] who is in torment with us but short while, and goes yonder with our companions, afflicts us greatly with his words.”

[1] Nothing is known from contemporary record of Borsiere, but Boccaccio tells a story of him in the Decameron, giorn. i. nov. 8.

“The new people and the sudden gains [1] have generated pride and excess, Florence, in thee, so that already thou weepest thereat.” Thus cried I with face uplifted. And the three, who understood that for answer, looked one at the other, as men look at hearing truth.

[1] Florence had grown rapidly in population and in wealth during the last years of the thirteenth century.

“If other times it costeth thee so little,” replied they all, “to satisfy others, happy thou that thus speakest at thy pleasure. Therefore, if thou escapest from these dark places, and returnest to see again the beautiful stars, when it shall rejoice thee to say, ‘I have been,’ mind thou speak of us unto the people.” Then they broke the wheel, and in flying their swift legs seemed wings.

Not an amen could have been said so quickly as they had disappeared; wherefore it seemed good to my Master to depart. I followed him, and we had gone little way before the sound of the water was so near to us, that had we spoken we scarce had heard. As that river on the left slope of the Apennine, which, the first from Monte Veso toward the east, has its proper course, — which is called Acquacheta up above, before it sinks valleyward into its low bed, and at Forli no longer has that name,[1] — reverberates from the alp in falling with a single leap there above San Benedetto, where there ought to be shelter for a thousand;[2] thus down from a precipitous bank we found that dark-tinted water resounding, so that in short while it would have hurt the ears.

[1] At Forli the river is called the Montone; it was the first of the rivers on the left of the Apennines that had its course to the sea; the others before it being tributaries of the Po, which rises on Monte Veso.

[2] These last words are obscure, and none of the commentators explain them satisfactorily.

I had a cord girt around me, and with it I had once thought to take the leopard of the dappled skin.[1] After I had loosed it wholly from me, even as my Leader had commanded me, I reached it to him wound up and coiled. Whereon he turned toward the right, and somewhat far from the edge threw it down into that deep abyss. “And surely some strange thing must needs respond,” said I to myself, “to the strange signal which the Master so follows with his eye.”

[2] The leopard of the dappled skin, which had often turned back Dante from the Mountain to the Dark Wood (see Canto i.); the type of sensual sin. The cord is the type of religions asceticism, of which the poet no longer has need. The meaning of its use as a signal is not apparent.

Ah! how cautious men ought to be near those who see not only the act, but with their wisdom look within the thoughts. He said to me: “Soon will come up that which I await, and what thy thought is dreaming must soon discover itself unto thy sight.”

To that truth which has the aspect of falsehood ought one always to close his lips so far as he can, because without fault it causes shame;[1] but here I cannot be silent, and by the notes of this comedy, Reader, I swear to thee, — so may they not be void of lasting grace, — that I saw through that thick and dark air a shape come swimming upwards marvelous to every steadfast heart; like as he returns who goes down sometimes to loose an anchor that grapples either a rock or other thing that in the sea is hid, who stretches upward, and draws in his feet.

[1] Because the narrator is falsely taxed with falsehood.

CANTO XVII.

Third round of the Seventh Circle: of those who have done violence to Art. — Geryon. — The Usurers. — Descent to the Eighth Circle.

"Behold the wild beast with the pointed tail, that passes mountains, and breaks walls and weapons; behold him that infects all the world."[1] Thus began my Leader to speak to me; and he beckoned to him that he should come to shore near the end of the trodden marbles.[2] And that loathsome image of fraud came onward, and landed his head and his body, but drew not his tail upon the bank. His face was the face of a just man (so benignant was its skin outwardly), and of a serpent all the trunk beside; he had two paws, hairy to the armpits; his back and breast and both his sides were painted with nooses and circles. With more colors of woof and warp Tartars or Turks never made cloth, nor were such webs woven by Arachne.

[1] Dante makes Geryon the type and image of Fraud, thus allegorizing the triple form (forma tricorperis umbrae: Aeneid vi. 289; tergemini Geryonae; Id. viii. 292) ascribed to him by the ancient poets.

[2] The stony margin of Phlegethon, on which Virgil and Dante have crossed the sand.

As sometimes boats lie on the shore, so that they are partly in water and partly on the ground, and as yonder, among the gluttonous Germans, the beaver settles himself to make his war,[1] so lay that worst of beasts upon the rim that closes in the sand with stone. In the void all his tail was quivering, twisting upwards its venomous fork, which like a scorpion's armed the point.

[1] With his tail in the water to catch his prey, as was popularly believed.

The Leader said: "Now needs must our way bend a little toward that wicked beast that is couching there." Therefore we descended on the right hand and took ten steps upon the verge quite to avoid the sand and flame. And when we had come to it, I see, a little farther on, people sitting upon the sand near to the void place.[1]

[1] These people are the third class of sinners punished in this round of the Seventh Circle, those who have done violence to Art, the usurers. (See Canto xi.)

Here the Master said to me: "In order that thou mayst bear away complete experience of this round, now go and see their condition. Let thy discourse there be brief. Till thou returnest I will speak with this one, that he may concede to us his strong shoulders."

Thus, still up by the extreme head of that seventh circle, all alone, I went where the sad people were sitting. Through the eyes their woe was bursting

forth. This way and that they helped with their hands, sometimes against the vapors,[1] and sometimes against the hot soil. Not otherwise do the dogs in summer, now with muzzle, now with paw, when they are bitten either by fleas, or flies, or gadflies. When I set my eyes on the face of some on whom the woeful fire falls, not one of them I recognized;[2] but I perceived that from the neck of each was hanging a pouch, that had a certain color and a certain device,[3] and thereupon it seems their eyes feed. And as I looking come among them, I saw upon a yellow purse azure that had the face and bearing of a lion.[4] Then as the current of my look proceeded I saw another, red as blood, display a goose whiter than butter. And one, who had his little white bag marked with an azure and pregnant sow,[5] said to me, “What art thou doing in this ditch? Now get thee gone, and since thou art still alive, know that my neighbor, Vitaliano, will sit here at my left side. With these Florentines am I, a Paduan; often they stun my ears shouting, “Let the sovereign cavalier come who will bring the pouch with the three goats.”[1] Then he twisted his mouth, and stuck out his tongue, like an ox that licks his nose.

[1] The falling flames.

[2] Dante thus indicates that they were not worthy to be known.

[3] The blazon of their arms, by which Dante learns who they are.

[4] This was the device of the Gianfigliazzi, a Guelph family of Florence; the next was that of the Ubriachi, Ghibellines, also of Florence.

[5] Arms of the Scrovigni of Padua.

[6] One Giovanni Buiamonte of Florence, “who surpassed all others of the time in usury,” says Benvenuto da Imola.

And I, fearing lest longer stay might vex him who had admonished me to stay but little, turned back from these weary souls. I found my Leader, who had already mounted upon the croup of the fierce animal, and he said to me, “Now be strong and courageous; henceforth the descent is by such stairs; [1] mount thou in front, for I wish to be between, so that the tail cannot do thee harm.”

[1] Not by foot, nor by boat as heretofore, but carried by living ministers of Hell.

As is he who hath the shivering fit of the quartan so near that his nails are already pallid, and he is all of a tremble only looking at the shade, such I became at these words uttered. But his reproaches wrought shame in me, which in presence of a good lord makes a servant strong.

I seated myself on those huge shoulders. I wished to speak thus, “Take heed that thou embrace me,” but the voice came not as I had thought. But he who other time had succored me, in other peril, soon as I mounted, clasped and

sustained me with his arms: and he said, “Geryon, move on now; let the circles be wide, and the descending slow; consider the strange burden that thou hast.”

As a little vessel goeth from its place, backward, backward, so he thence withdrew; and when he felt himself quite at play, he turned his tail to where his breast had been, and moved it, stretched out like an eel, and with his paws gathered the air to himself. Greater fear I do not think there was when Phaethon abandoned the reins, whereby heaven, as is still apparent, was scorched; nor when the wretched Icarus felt his flanks unfeathering through the melting of the wax, his father shouting to him, “Ill way thou holdest,” than mine was, when I saw that I was in the air on every side, and saw every sight vanished, except that of the beast. He goes along swimming very slowly, wheels and descends, but I perceive it not, save by the wind upon my face, and from below.

I heard now on the right hand the gorge making beneath us a horrible roar; wherefore I stretch out my head, with my eyes downward. Then I became more afraid to lean over, because I saw fires and heard laments; whereat I, trembling, wholly cowered back. And I saw then, what I had not seen before, the descending and the wheeling, by the great evils that were drawing near on diverse sides.

As the falcon which has been long on wing, that, without sight of lure or bird, makes the falconer say, “Ah me, thou stoopest!” descends weary, there whence he had set forth swiftly, through a hundred circles, and lights far from his master, disdainful and sullen; so Geryon set us at the bottom, at the very foot of the scarped rock, and, disburdened of our persons, darted away as arrow from the bowstring.

CANTO XVIII.

Eighth Circle: the first pit: panders and seducers. — Venedico Caccianimico. — Jason. — Second pit: false flatterers. — Alessio Interminei. — Thais.

There is a place in Hell called Malebolge, all of stone of the color of iron, as is the encircling wall that surrounds it. Right in the middle of this field malign yawns an abyss exceeding wide and deep, the structure of which I will tell of in its place. That belt, therefore, which remains between the abyss and the foot of the high bank is circular, and it has its ground divided into ten valleys. Such an aspect as where, for guard of the walls, many moats encircle castles, the place where they are presents, such image did these make here. And as in such strongholds from their thresholds to the outer bank are little bridges, so from the base of the precipitous wall started crags which traversed the dykes and the moats far as the abyss that collects and cuts them off.

In this place, shaken off from the back of Geryon, we found ourselves; and the Poet held to the left, and I moved on behind. On the right hand I saw new sorrow, new torments, and new scourgers, with which the first pit [1] was replete. At its bottom were the sinners naked. This side the middle they came facing us; on the farther side with us, but with swifter pace. As the Romans, because of the great host in the year of Jubilee,[2] have taken means upon the bridge for the passage of the people, who on one side all have their front toward the Castle,[3] and go to Saint Peter’s, and on the other toward the Mount.[4]

[1] Bolgia, literally, budget, purse, sack, here used for circular valley, or pit.

[2] The year 1299-1300, from Christmas to Easter.

[3] Of Sant’ Angelo.

[4] The Capitoline.

Along the gloomy rock, on this side and on that, I saw horned demons with great scourges, who were beating them cruelly from behind. Ah! how they made them lift their heels at the first blows; truly not one waited for the second, or the third.

While I was going on, my eyes encountered one, and I said straightway, “Ere now for sight of him I have not fasted;” wherefore to shape him out I stayed my feet, and the sweet Leader stopped with ire, and assented to my going somewhat back. And that scourged one thought to conceal himself by lowering his face, but little it availed him, for I said: “O thou that castest thine eye upon the ground, if

the features that thou bearest are not false, thou art Venedico Caccianimico; but what brings thee unto such pungent sauces?"

And he to me, "Unwillingly I tell it, but thy clear speech compels me, which makes me recollect the olden world. I was he who brought the beautiful Ghisola[1] to do the will of the Marquis, how ever the shameful tale may be reported. And not the only Bolognese do I weep here, nay, this place is so full of them, that so many tongues are not now taught between Savena and the Reno to say sipa; [2] and if of this thou wishest pledge or testimony, bring to mind our avaricious heart." As he spoke thus a demon struck him with his scourge and said, "Begone, pandar, here are no women for coining."

[1] His own sister; the unseemly tale is known only through Dante and his fourteenth-century commentators, and the latter, while agreeing that the Marquis was one of the Esti of Ferrara, do not agree as to which of them he was.

[2] Bologna lies between the Savena and the Reno; sipa is the Bolognese form of sia, or si.

I rejoined my Escort; then with few steps we came to where a crag jutted from the bank.[1] Easily enough we ascended it, and turning to the right[2] upon its ridge, from those eternal circles we departed.

[1] Forming a bridge, thrown like an arch across the pit.

[2] The course of the Poets, which has mostly been to the left through the upper Circles, is now generally to proceed straight across the lower Circles where Fraud is punished. They had been going to the left at the foot of the precipice, and consequently turn to the right to ascend the bridge. The allegorical intention in the direction of their course is evident.

When we were there where it opens below to give passage to the scourged, the Leader said, "Stop, and let the sight strike on thee of these other miscreants, of whom thou hast not yet seen the face, because they have gone along in the same direction with us."

From the ancient bridge we looked at the train that was coining toward us from the other side, and which the whip in like manner drives on. The good Master, without my asking, said to me, "Look at that great one who is coming, and seems not to shed a tear for pain. What royal aspect he still retains! He is Jason, who by courage and by wit despoiled the Colchians of their ram. He passed by the isle of Lemnos, after the undaunted women pitiless had given all their males to death. There with tokens and with ornate words he deceived Hypsipyle, the maiden, who first had deceived all the rest. There he left her pregnant, and alone; such sin condemns him to such torment; and also for Medea is vengeance done. With him goes whoso in such wise deceives. And let this suffice to know of the first valley, and of those that it holds in its fangs."

Now we were where the narrow path sets across the second dyke, and makes of it shoulders for another arch. Here we heard people moaning in the next pit, and snorting with their muzzles, and with their palms beating themselves. The

banks were encrusted with a mould because of the breath from below that sticks on them, and was making quarrel with the eyes and with the nose. The bottom is so hollowed out that no place sufficeth us for seeing it, without mounting on the crest of the arch where the crag rises highest. Hither we came, and thence, down in the ditch, I saw people plunged in an excrement that seemed as if it proceeded from human privies.

And while I am searching down there with my eye, I saw one with his head so foul with ordure that it was not apparent whether he were layman or clerk. He shouted to me, “Why art so greedy to look more at me than at the other filthy ones?” And I to him, “Because, if I remember rightly, ere now I have seen thee with dry hair, and thou art Alessio Interminei of Lucca[1]; therefore I eye thee more than all the rest.” And he then, beating his pate, “Down here those flatteries wherewith my tongue was never cloyed have submerged me.”

[1] Of him nothing is known but what these words tell.

Hereupon my Leader, “Mind thou push thy sight a little farther forward so that with thine eyes thou mayest quite reach the face of that dirty and disheveled creature, who is scratching herself there with her nasty nails, and now is crouching down and now standing on foot. She is Thais the prostitute, who answered her paramour when he said, ‘Have I great thanks from thee?’— ‘Nay, marvelous.’” [1] And herewith let our sight be satisfied.

[1] These words are derived from Terence, Eunuchus, act iii. sc. 1.

CANTO XIX.

Eighth Circle third pit: simonists. — Pope Nicholas III.

Oh Simon Magus! Oh ye his wretched followers, who, rapacious, do prostitute for gold and silver the things of God that ought to be the brides of righteousness, now it behoves for you the trumpet sound, since ye are in the third pit!

Already were we come to the next tomb,[1] mounted on that part of the crag which just above the middle of the ditch hangs plumb. Oh Supreme Wisdom, how great is the art that Thou displayest in Heaven, on Earth, and in the Evil World! and how justly doth Thy Power distribute!

[1] The next bolgia or pit.

I saw along the sides, and over the bottom, the livid stone full of holes all of one size, and each was circular. They seemed to me not less wide nor larger than those that in my beautiful Saint John are made as place for the baptizers [1] one of which, not many years ago, I broke for sake of one who was stifling in it; and be this the seal to undeceive all men. Forth from the mouth of each protruded the feet of a sinner, and his legs up to the calf, and the rest was within. The soles of all were both on fire, wherefore their joints quivered so violently that they would have snapped withes and bands. As the flaming of things oiled is wont to move only on the outer surface, so was it there from the heels to the toes.

[1] "My beautiful Saint John" is the Baptistery at Florence. In Dante's time the infants, born during the year, were all here baptized by immersion, mostly on the day of St. John Baptist, the 24th of June. There was a large circular font in the middle of the church, and around it in its marble wall were four cylindrical standing-places for the priests, closed by doors, to protect them from the pressure of the crowd.

"Who is he, Master, that writhes, quivering more than the others his consorts," said I, "and whom a ruddier flame is sucking?" And he to me, "If thou wilt that I carry thee down there by that bank which slopes the most,[1] from him thou shalt know of himself and of his wrongs." And I, "Whatever pleaseth thee even so is good to me. Thou art Lord, and knowest that I part me not from thy will, and thou knowest that which is unspoken."

[1] The whole of the Eighth circle slopes toward the centre, so that the inner wall of each bolgia is lower, and is less sharply inclined than the outer.

Then we went upon the fourth dyke, turned, and descended on the left hand, down to the bottom pierced with holes, and narrow. And the good Master set me

not down yet from his haunch, till he brought me to the cleft of him who was thus lamenting with his shanks.

"O whoe'er thou art, that keepest upside down, sad soul, planted like a stake," I began to say, "speak, if thou canst." I was standing like the friar who confesses the perfidious assassin,[1] who, after he is fixed, recalls him, in order to delay his death.

[1] Such criminals were not infrequently punished by being set, head downwards, in a hole in which they were buried alive.

And he[1] cried out, "Art thou already standing there? Art thoh already standing there, Boniface? By several years the record lied to me. Art thou so quickly sated with that having, for which thou didst not fear to seize by guile the beautiful Lady,[2] and then to do her outrage?"

[1] This is Nicholas III., pope from 1277 to 1280; he takes Dante to be Boniface VIII., but Boniface was not to die till 1303. Compare what Nicholas says of "the record" with Farinata's statement, in Canto X, concerning the foresight of the damned.

[2] The Church, to which Boniface did outrage in many forms; but worst by his simoniacal practices.

Such I became as those that, not comprehending that which is replied to them, stand as if mocked, and know not what to answer.

Then Virgil said, "Tell him quickly, I am not he, I am not he thou thinkest." And I answered as was enjoined on me; whereat the spirit quite twisted his feet. Thereafter, sighing and with tearful voice, he said to me, "Then what dost thou require of me? If to know who I am concerneth thee so much that thou hast crossed the bank therefor, know that I was vested with the Great Mantle; and verily I was a son of the She-Bear,[1] so eager to advance the cubs, that up there I put wealth, and here myself, into the purse. Beneath my head are stretched the others that preceded me in simony, flattened through the fissures of the rock. There below shall I likewise sink, when he shall come whom I believed thou wert, then when I put to thee the sudden question; but already the time is longer that I have cooked my feet, and that I have been thus upside down, than he will stay planted with red feet; for after him will come, of uglier deed, from westward, a shepherd without law,[2] such as must cover him and me again. A new Jason will he be, of whom it is read in Maccabees;[3] and as to that one his king was compliant, so unto this he who rules France shall be."[4]

[1] Nicholas was of the Orsini family.

[2] Clement V., who will come from Avignon, and in a little more than ten years after the death of Boniface. Nicholas had already "cooked his feet" for twenty years. The prophecy of the death of Clement after a shorter time affords an indication that this canto was not written until after 1314, the year of his death.

[3] The story of Jason, "that ungodly wretch and no high-priest" who bought the high-priesthood from King Antiochus, is told in 2 Maccabees iv. Its application to the Pope was plain.

[4] "He who rules France" was Philip the Fair.

I know not if here I was too audacious that I only answered him in this strain, “Pray now tell me how much treasure our Lord desired of Saint Peter before he placed the keys in his keeping? Surely he required nothing save ‘Follow me.’ Nor did Peter or the others require of Matthias gold or silver, when he was chosen to the place which the guilty soul had lost. Therefore stay thou, for thou art rightly punished, and guard well the ill-gotten money that against Charles[1] made thee to be bold. And were it not that reverence for the Supreme Keys that thou heldest in the glad life still forbiddeth me, I would use words still more grave; for your avarice saddens the world, trampling down the good and exalting the bad. Of you shepherds the Evangelist was aware, when she that sitteth upon the waters was seen by him to fornicate with kings: that woman that was born with the seven heads, and from the ten horns had evidence, so long as virtue pleased her spouse.[2] Ye have made you a god of gold and silver: and what difference is there between you and the idolater save that he worships one and ye a hundred? Ah Constantine! of how much ill was mother, not thy conversion, but that dowry which the first rich Father received from thee!”[3]

[1] Charles of Anjou, of whom Nicholas III, was the enemy. He was charged with having been bribed to support the attempt to expel the French from Sicily, which began with the Sicilian Vespers in 1282.

[2] Dante deals freely with the figures of the Apocalypse: Revelation vii. The woman here stands for the Church; her seven heads may be interpreted as the Seven Sacraments, and her ten horns as the Commandments; her spouse is the Pope.

[3] The reference is to the so-called Donation of Constantine, the reality of which was generally accepted till long after Dante’s time.

And, while I was singing these notes to him, whether anger or conscience stung him, he violently quivered with both feet. I believe, forsooth, that it had pleased my Leader, with so contented look be listened ever to the sound of the true words uttered. Thereupon with both his arms he took me, and when he had me wholly on his breast, remounted on the way by which he had descended. Nor did he tire of holding me clasped till he had borne me up to the summit of the arch which is the passage from the fourth to the fifth dyke. Here softly he laid down his burden, softly because of the ragged and steep crag, that would be a difficult pass for goats. Thence another great valley was discovered to me.

CANTO XX.

Eighth Circle: fourth pit: diviners, soothsayers, and magicians. — Amphiaraus. — Tiresias. — Aruns. — Manto. — Eurypylus. — Michael Scott. — Asdente.

Of a new punishment needs must I make verses, and give matetial to the twentieth canto of the first lay, which is of the submerged.[1]

[1] Plunged into the misery of Hell.

I was now wholly set on looking into the disclosed depth that was bathed with tears of anguish, and I saw folk coming, silent and weeping, through the circular valley, at the pace at which lltanies go in this world. As my sight descended deeper among them, each appeared marvelously distorted from the chin to the beginning of the chest; for toward their reins their face was turned, and they must needs go backwards, because they were deprived of looking forward. Perchance sometimes by force of palsy one has been thus completely twisted, but I never saw it, nor do I think it can be.

So may God let thee, Reader, gather fruit from thy reading, now think for thyself how I could keep my face dry, when near by I saw our image so contorted that the weeping of the eyes bathed the buttocks along the cleft. Truly I wept, leaning on one of the rocks of the hard crag, so that my Guide said to me, "Art thou also one of the fools? Here pity liveth when it is quite dead.[1]

Who is more wicked than he who feels compassion at the Divine Judgment? Lift up thy head, lift up, and see him [2] for whom the earth opened before the eyes of the Thebans, whereon they shouted all, 'Whither art thou rushing, Amphiaraus? Why dost thou leave the war?' And he stopped not from falling headlong down far as Minos, who seizes hold of every one. Look, how he has made a breast of his shoulders! Because he wished to see too far before him, he looks behind and makes a backward path.

[1] It is impossible to give the full significance of Dante's words in a literal translation, owing to the double meaning of pieta in the original. Qui viva la pieta quando e ben morta. That is: "Here liveth piety when pity is quite dead."

[2] One of the seven kings who besieged Thebes, augur and prophet. Dante found his story in Statius, Thebais, viii. 84.

"See Tiresias,[1] who changed his semblance, when from a male he became a female, his members all of them being transformed; and afterwards was obliged to strike once more the two entwined serpents with his rod, ere he could regain his masculine plumage. Aruns[2] is he that to this one's belly has his back, who on the mountains of Luni (where grubs the Carrarese who dwells beneath), amid

white marbles, had a cave for his abode, whence for looking at the stars and the sea his view was not cut off.

[1] The Theban soothsayer. Dante had learned of him from Ovid., Metam., iii. 320 sqq., as well as from Statius.

[2] An Etruscan haruspex of whom Lucan tells, — Arens incoluit desertae moenia Lanae. Phars. i. 556.

"And she who with her loose tresses covers her breasts, which thou dost not see, and has on that side all her hairy skin, was Manto,[1] who sought through many lands, then settled there where I was born; whereof it pleases me that thou listen a little to me. After her father had departed from life, and the city of Bacchus had become enslaved, long while she wandered through the world. Up in fair Italy lies a lake, at foot of the alp that shuts in Germany above Tyrol, and it is called Benaco.[2] Through a thousand founts, I think, and more, between Garda and Val Camonica, the Apennine is bathed by the water which settles in that lake. Midway is a place where the Trentine Pastor and he of Brescia and the Veronese might each give his blessing if he took that road.[3] Peschiera, fortress fair and strong, sits to confront the Brescians and Bergamasques, where the shore round about is lowest. Thither needs must fall all that which in the lap of Benaco cannot stay, and it becomes a river down through the verdant pastures. Soon as the water gathers head to run, no longer is it called Benaco, but Mincio, far as Governo, where it falls into the Po. No long course it hath before it finds a plain, on which it spreads, and makes a marsh, and is wont in summer sometimes to be noisome. Passing that way, the cruel virgin saw a land in the middle of the fen without culture and bare of inhabitants. There, to avoid all human fellowship, she stayed with her servants to practice her arts, and lived, and left there her empty body. Afterward the men who were scattered round about gathered to that place, which was strong because of the fen which surrounded it. They built the city over those dead hones, and for her, who first had chosen the place, they called it Mantua, without other augury. Of old its people were more thick within it, before the stupidity of Casalodi had been tricked by Pinamonte.[4] Therefore I warn thee, that if thou ever hearest otherwise the origin of my town, no falsehood may defraud the truth."

[1] The daughter of Tiresias, of whom Statius, Ovid, and Virgil all tell.

[2] Now Lago di Garda.

[3] Where the three dioceses meet.

[4] The Count of Casalodi, being lord of Mantua about 1276, gave ear to the treacherous counsels of Messer Pinamonte de Buonacorsi, and was driven, with his friends, from the city.

And I, "Master, thy discourses are so certain to me, and so lay hold on my faith, that the others would be to me as dead embers. But tell me of the people

who are passing, if thou seest any one of them worthy of note; for only unto that my mind reverts."

Then he said to me, "That one, who from his cheek stretches his beard upon his dusky shoulders, was an augur when Greece was so emptied of males that they scarce remained for the cradles, and with Calchas at Aulis he gave the moment for cutting the first cable. Eurypylus was his name, and thus my lofty Tragedy sings him in some place;[1] well knowest thou this, who knowest the whole of it. That other who is so small in the flanks was Michael Scott,[2] who verily knew the game of magical deceptions. See Guido Bonatti,[3] see Asdente,[4] who now would wish he had attended to his leather and his thread, but late repents. See the forlorn women who left the needle, the spool, and the spindle, and became fortune-tellers; they wrought spells with herb and with image.

[1] Suspensi Eurypylum scitantem oracula Phoebi
Mittimus. Aeneid, ii. 112.

[2] A wizard of such dreaded fame
That, when in Salamanca's cave
Him listed his magic wand to wave,
The bells would ring in Notre Dame.
Lay of the Lost Minstrel, Canto ii.

[3] A famous astrologer of Forli, in the thirteenth century.

[4] Dante, in the Canvito, trattato iv. c. 16, says that if NOBLE meant being widely known, then "Asdente, the shoemaker of Parma, would be more noble than any of his fellow-citizens."

"But come on now, for already Cain with his thorns [1] holds the confines of both the hemispheres, and touches the wave below Seville. And already yesternight was the moon round; well shouldst thou remember it, for it did thee no harm sometimes in the deep wood." Thus he spoke to me, and we went on the while.

[1] The Man in the Moon, according to an old popular legend.

CANTO XXI.

Eighth Circle: fifth pit: barrators. — A magistrate of Lucca. — The Malebranche. — Parley with them.

So from bridge to bridge we went, speaking other things, which my Comedy careth not to sing, and held the suffimit, when we stopped to see the next cleft of Malebolge and the next vain lamentations; and I saw it wonderfully dark.

As in the Arsenal of the Venetians, in winter, the sticky pitch for smearing their unsound vessels is boiling, because they cannot go to sea, and, instead thereof, one builds him a new bark, and one caulks the sides of that which hath made many a voyage; one hammers at the prow, and one at the stern; another makes oars, and another twists the cordage; and one the foresail and the mainsail patches, — so, not by fire, but by divine art, a thick pitch was boiling there below, which belimed the bank on every side. I saw it, but saw not in it aught but the bubbles which the boiling raised, and all of it swelling up and again sinking compressed.

While I was gazing down there fixedly, my Leader, saying, “Take heed! take heed!” drew me to himself from the place where I was standing. Then I turned as one who is slow to see what it behoves him to fly, and whom a sudden fear unnerves, and delays not to depart in order to see. And I saw behind us a black devil come running up along the crag. Ah! how fell he was in aspect, and how rough he seemed to me in action, with wings open, and light upon his feet! His shoulder, which was sharp and high, was laden by a sinner with both haunches, the sinew of whose feet he held clutched. “O Malebranche[1] of our bridge,” he said, “lo, one of the Ancients of Saint Zita[2] put him under, for I return again to that city, which I have furnished well with them; every man there is a barrator,[3] except Bonturo:[4] there, for money, of No they make Ay.” He hurled him down, and along the hard crag he turned, and never mastiff loosed was in such haste to follow a thief.

[1] Malebranche means Evil-claws.

[2] One of the chief magistrates of Lucca, whose special protectress was Santa Zita.

[3] A corrupt official, selling justice or office for bribes; in general, a peculator or cheat.

[4] Ironical.

That one sank under, and came up back uppermost, but the demons that had shelter of the bridge cried out, “Here the Holy Face[1] avails not; here one swims otherwise than in the Serchio;[2] therefore, if thou dost not want our grapples, make no show above the pitch.” Then they struck him with more than a hundred

prongs, and said, “Covered must thou dance here, so that, if thou canst, thou mayst swindle secretly.” Not otherwise cooks make their scullions plunge the meat with their hooks into the middle of the cauldron, so that it may not float.

[1] An image of Christ upon the cross, ascribed to Nicodemus, still venerated at Lucca.

[2] The river that runs not far from Lucca.

The good Master said to me, “In order that it be not apparent that thou art here, crouch down behind a splinter, that may afford some screen to thee, and at any offense that may be done to me be not afraid, for I have knowledge of these things, because another time I was at such a fray.”

Then he passed on beyond the head of the bridge, and when he arrived upon the sixth bank, he had need of a steadfast front. With such fury and with such storm, as dogs run out upon the poor wretch, who of a sudden begs where he stops, they came forth from under the little bridge, and turned against him all their forks. But he cried out, “Be no one of you savage; ere your hook take hold of me, let one of you come forward that he may hear me, and then take counsel as to grappling me.” All cried out, “Let Malacoda[1] go!” Whereon one moved, and the rest stood still; and he came toward him, saying, “What doth this avail him?” “Thinkest thou, Malacoda, to see me come here,” said my Master, “safe hitherto from all your hindrances, except by Will Divine and fate propitious? Let us go on, for in Heaven it is willed that I show another this savage road.” Then was his arrogance so fallen that he let the hook drop at his feet, and said to the rest, “Now let him not be struck.”

[1] Wicked tail.

And my Leader to me, “O thou that sittest cowering among the splinters of the bridge, securely now return to me.” Whereat I moved and came swiftly to him. And the devils all pressed forward, so that I feared they would not keep their compact. And thus I once saw the foot-soldiers afraid, who came out under pledge from Caprona,[1] seeing themselves among so many enemies. I drew with my whole body alongside my Leader, and turned not mine eyes from their look, which was not good. They lowered their forks, and, “Wilt thou that I touch him on the rump?” said one to the other, and they answered, “Yes, see thou nick it for him.” But that demon who was holding speech with my Leader turned very quickly and said, “Stay, stay, Scarmiglione!”

[1] In August, 1290, the town of Caprona, on the Arno, surrendered to the Florentine troops, with whom Dante was serving.

Then he said to us, “Further advance along this crag there cannot be, because the sixth arch lies all shattered at the bottom. And if to go forward still is your

pleasure, go on along this rocky bank; near by is another crag that affords a way. Yesterday, five hours later than this hour, one thousand two hundred and sixty-six years were complete since the way was broken here.[1] I am sending thitherward some of these of mine, to see if any one is airing himself; go ye with them, for they will not be wicked. Come forward, Alichino and Calcabrina," began he to say, "and thou, Cagnazzo; and do thou, Barbariccia, guide the ten. Let Libicocco come also, and Draghignazzo, tusked Ciriatto, and Graffiacane, and Farfarello, and mad Rubicante. Search round about the boiling pitch; let these be safe far as the next crag, that all unbroken goes over these dens."

[1] By the earthquake at the death of the Saviour.

"O me! Master, what is it that I see?" said I; "pray let us go alone without escort, if thou knowest the way, for I desire it not for myself. If thou art as wary as thou art wont to be, dost thou not see that they show their teeth, and threaten harm to us with their brows?" And he to me, "I would not have thee afraid. Let them grin on at their will, for they are doing it at the boiled wretches."

Upon the left bank they wheeled round, but first each had pressed his tongue with his teeth toward their leader for a signal, and he had made a trumpet of his rump.

CANTO XXII.

Eighth Circle: fifth pit: barrators. — Ciampolo of Navarre. — Fra Gomita. — Michaci Zanche. — Fray of the Malebranche.

I have seen of old horsemen moving camp, and beginning an assault, and making their muster, and sometimes setting forth on their escape; I have seen runners through your land, O Aretines, and I have seen freebooters starting, tournaments struck and jousts run, at times with trumpets, and at times with bells, with drums, and with signals from strongholds, and with native things and foreign, — but never with so strange a pipe did I see horsemen or footmen set forth, or ship by sign of land or star.

We went along with the ten demons. Ah, the fell company! but in the church with saints, and in the tavern with gluttons. Ever on the pitch was I intent, to see every aspect of the pit, and of the people that were burning in it.

As dolphins, when, by the arching of their back, they give a sign to sailors that they take heed for the safety of their vessel, so, now and then, to alleviate his pain, one of the sinners showed his back and hid in less time than it lightens. And as at the edge of the water of a ditch the frogs stand with only their muzzle out, so that they conceal their feet and the rest of their bulk, thus stood on every side the sinners; but as Barbariccia approached so did they draw back beneath the boiling. I saw, and still my heart shudders at it, one waiting, just as it happens that one frog stays and another jumps. And Graffiacane, who was nearest over against him, hooked him by his pitchy locks, and drew him up so that he seemed to me an otter. I knew now the name of every one of them, so had I noted them when they were chosen, and when they had called each other I had listened how. “O Rubicante, see thou set thy claws upon him so thou flay him,” shouted all the accursed ones together.

And I, “My Master, see, if thou canst, that thou find out who is the luckless one come into the hands of his adversaries.” My Leader drew up to his side, asked him whence he was, and he replied, “I was born in the kingdom of Navarre; my mother placed me in service of a lord, for she had borne me to a ribald, destroyer of himself and of his substance. Afterward I was of the household of the good King Thibault;[1] there I set myself to practice barratry, for which I pay reckoning in this heat.”

[1] Probably Thibault II., the brother-in-law of St Louis, who accompanied him on his last disastrous crusade, and died on his way home in 1270.

And Ciriatto, from whose mouth protruded on either side a tusk, as in a boar, made him feel how one of them rips. Among evil cats the mouse had come; but Barbariccia clasped him in his arms, and said, “Stand off, while I enfork him,” and to my Master turned his face. “Ask,” said he, “if thou desirest to know more from him, before some other undo him.” The Leader, “Now, then, tell of the other sinners; knowst thou any one under the pitch who is Italian?” And he, “I parted short while since from one who was a neighbor to it; would that with him I still were covered so that I might not fear claw or hook.” And Libicocco said, “We have borne too much,” and seized his arm with his grapple so that, tearing, he carried off a sinew of it. Draghignazzo, also, he wished to give him a clutch down at his legs, whereat their decurion turned round about with evil look.

When they were a little appeased, my Leader, without delay, asked him who still was gazing at his wound, “Who was he from whom thou sayest thou madest in parting to come to shore?” And he replied, “It was Brother Gomita, he of Gallura,[1] vessel of all fraud, who held the enemies of his lord in hand, and dealt so with them that they all praise him for it. Money he took, and let them smoothly off, so he says; and in other offices besides he was no little barrator, but sovereign. With him frequents Don Michael Zanche of Logodoro,[2] and in talking of Sardinia their tongues feel not weary. O me! see ye that other who is grinning: I would say more, but I fear lest he is making ready to scratch my itch.” And the grand provost, turning to Farfarello, who was rolling his eyes as if to strike, said, “Get thee away, wicked bird!”

[1] Gallura, one of the four divisions of Sardinia, called judicatures, made by the Pisans, after their conquest of the island. The lord of Gomita was the gentle Judge Nino, whom Dante meets in Purgatory. Gomita was hung for his frauds.

[2] Logodoro was another of the judicatures of Sardinia. Don Michael Zanche was a noted man, but of his special sins little or nothing has been recorded by the chroniclers.

“If you wish to see or to hear Tuscans or Lombards,” thereon began again the frightened one, “I will make them come; but let the Malebranche stand a little withdrawn, so that they may not be afraid of their vengeance, and I, sitting in this very place, for one that I am, will make seven of them come, when I shall whistle as is our wont to do whenever one of us comes out.” Cagnazzo at this speech raised his muzzle, shaking his head, and said, “Hear the knavery he has devised for throwing himself under!” Whereon he who had snares in great plenty answered, “Too knavish am I, when I procure for mine own companions greater sorrow.” Alichino held not in, and, in opposition to the others, said to him, “If thou dive, I will not come behind thee at a gallop, but I will beat my wings above the pitch; let the ridge be left, and be the bank a shield, to see if thou alone availest more than we.”

O thou that readest! thou shalt hear new sport. Each turned his eyes to the other side, he first who had been most averse to doing it. The Navarrese chose well his time, planted his feet firmly on the ground, and in an instant leaped, and from their purpose freed himself. At this, each of them was pricked with shame, but he most who was the cause of the loss; wherefore he started and cried out, “Thou art caught.” But little it availed, for wings could not outstrip fear. The one went under, and the other, flying, turned his breast upward. Not otherwise the wild duck on a sudden dives when the falcon comes close, and he returns up vexed and baffled. Calcabrina, enraged at the flout, kept flying behind him, desirous that the sinner should escape, that he might have a scuffle; and when the barrator had disappeared he turned his talons upon his companion, and grappled with him above the ditch. But the other was indeed a sparrowhawk full grown to gripe him well, and both fell into the midst of the boiling pool. The heat was a sudden ungrappler, but nevertheless there was no rising from it, they had their wings so glued. Barbariccia, grieving with the rest of his troop, made four of them fly to the other side with all their forks, and very quickly, this side and that, they descended to their post. They stretched out their hooks toward the belimed ones, who were already baked within the crust: and we left them thus embroiled.

CANTO XXIII.

Eighth Circle. Escape from the fifth pit. — The sixth pit: hypocrites, in cloaks of gilded lead. — Jovial Friars. — Caiaphas. — Annas. — Frate Catalano.

Silent, alone, and without company, we went on, one before, the other behind, as the Minor friars go along the way. My thought was turned by the present brawl upon the fable of Aesop, in which he tells of the frog and the mole; for NOW and THIS INSTANT are not more alike than the one is to the other, if beginning and end are rightly coupled by the attentive mind.[1] And as one thought bursts out from another, so from that then sprang another which made my first fear double. I reflected in this wise: These through us have been flouted, and with such harm and mock as I believe must vex them greatly; if anger to ill-will be added, they will come after us more merciless than the dog upon the leveret which he snaps.

[1] "Sed dices forsan, lector," says Benvenuto da Imola, "nescio per me videre quomodo istae duae fictiones habeant inter se tantam convenientam. Ad quod respondeo, quod passus vere est fortis." The point seems to be that, the frog having deceitfully brought the mole to trouble and death, the mole declares, "me vindicabit major," and the eagle swoops down and devours the frog as well as the dead mole. The comparison is not very close except in the matter of anticipated vengeance.

Already I was feeling my hair all bristling with fear, and was backwards intent, when I said, "Master, if thou concealest not thyself and me speedily, I am afraid of the Malebranche; we have them already behind us, and I so imagine them that I already feel them." And he, "If I were of leaded glass,[1] I should not draw thine outward image more quickly to me than thine inward I receive. Even now came thy thoughts among mine, with similar action and with similar look, so that of both one sole design I made. If it be that the right bank lieth so that we can descend into the next pit, we shall escape the imagined chase."

[1] A mirror.

Not yet had he finished reporting this design, when I saw them coming with spread wings, not very far off, with will to take us. My Leader on a sudden took me, as a mother who is wakened by the noise, and near her sees the kindled flames, who takes her son and flies, and, having more care of him than of herself, stays not so long as only to put on a shift. And down from the ridge of the hard bank, supine he gave himself to the sloping rock that closes one of the sides of the next pit. Never ran water so swiftly through a duct, to turn the wheel of a land-mill, when it approaches near est to the paddles, as my Master over that border, bearing me along upon his breast, as his own son, and not as his companion. Hardly had his feet reached the bed of the depth below, when they were on the ridge right over us; but here there was no fear, for the high

Providence that willed to set them as ministers of the fifth ditch deprived them all of power of departing thence.

There below we found a painted people who were going around with very slow steps, weeping, and in their semblance weary and vanquished. They had cloaks, with hoods lowered before their eyes, made of the same cut as those of the monks in Cluny. Outwardly they are gilded, so that it dazzles, but within all lead, and so heavy that Frederick put them on of straw.[1] Oh mantle wearisome for eternity!

[1] The leaden cloaks which the Emperor Frederick II. caused to be put on criminals, who were then burned to death, were light as straw in comparison with these.

We turned, still ever to the left hand, along with them, intent on their sad plaint. But because of the weight that tired folk came so slowly that we had fresh company at every movement of the haunch. Wherefore I to my Leader, “See that thou find some one who may be known by deed or name, and so in going move thy eyes around.” And one who understood the Tuscan speech cried out behind us, “Stay your feet, ye who run thus through the dusky air; perchance thou shalt have from me that which thou askest.” Whereon the Leader turned and said, “Await, and then according to his pace proceed.” I stopped, and saw two show, by their look, great haste of mind to be with me, but their load delayed them, and the narrow way.

When they had come up, somewhile, with eye askance,[1] they gazed at me without a word; then they turned to each other, and said one to the other, “This one seems alive by the action of his throat; and if they are dead, by what privilege do they go uncovered by the heavy stole?” Then they said to me, “O Tuscan, who to the college of the wretched hypocrites art come, disdain not to tell who thou art.” And I to them, “I was born and grew up on the fair river of Arno, at the great town, and I am in the body that I have always had. But ye, who are ye, in whom such woe distills, as I see, down your cheeks? and what punishment is on you that so sparkles?” And one of them replied to me, “The orange hoods are of lead so thick that the weights thus make their scales to creak. Jovial Friars[2] were we, and Bolognese; I Catalano, and he Loderingo named, and together taken by thy city, as one man alone is wont to be taken, in order to preserve its peace; and we were such as still is apparent round about the Gardingo.” I began, “O Friars, your evil” — but more I said not, for there struck mine eyes one crucified with three stakes on the ground. When me he saw he writhed all over, blowing into his beard with sighs: and the Friar Catalano, who observed it, said to me, “That transfixed one, whom thou lookest at, counseled the Pharisees that it was expedient to put one man to torture for the people.

Crosswise and naked is he on the path, as thou seest, and he first must feel how much whoever passes weighs. And in such fashion his father-in-law is stretched in this ditch, and the others of that Council which for the Jews was seed of ill."[3] Then I saw Virgil marvelling over him that was extended on a cross so vilely in eternal exile. Thereafter he addressed this speech to the Friar, "May it not displease thee, so it be allowed thee, to tell us if on the right hand lies any opening whereby we two can go out without constraining any of the Black Angels to come to deliver us from this deep." He answered then, "Nearer than thou hopest is a rock that from the great encircling wall proceeds and crosses all the savage valleys, save that at this one it is broken, and does not cover it. Ye can mount up over the ruin that slopes on the side, and heaps up at the bottom." The Leader stood a little while with bowed head, then said, "Ill he reported the matter, he who hooks the sinners yonder." [4] And the Friar, "I once heard tell at Bologna vices enough of the devil, among which I heard that he is false, and the father of lies." Then the Leader with great steps went on, disturbed a little with anger in his look; whereon I departed from the heavily burdened ones, following the prints of the beloved feet.

[1] They could not raise their heads for a straight look.

[2] Brothers of the order of Santa Maria, established in 1261, with knightly vows and high intent. From their free life the name of "Jovial Friars" was given to the members of the order. After the battle of Montaperti (1260) the Ghibellines held the upper hand in Florence for more than five years. The defeat and death of Manfred early in 1266, at the battle of Benevento, shook their power and revived the hopes of the Guelphs. As a measure of compromise, the Florentine Commune elected two podestas, one from each party; the Guelph was Catalano de' Malavolti, the Ghibelline, Loderingo degli Andalo, both from Bologna. They were believed to have joined hands for their own gain, and to have favored the reviving power of the Guelphs. In the troubles of the year the houses of the Uberti, a powerful Ghibelline family, were burned. They lay in the region of the city called the Gardingo, close to the Palazzo Vecchio.

[3] Annas "was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people." John xviii. 13-14; id. xi. 47-50.

[4] Malacoda had told him that he would find a bridge not far off by which to cross this sixth bolgia.

CANTO XXIV.

Eighth Circle. The poets climb from the sixth pit. — Seventh pit, filled with serpents, by which thieves are tormented. — Vanni Fucci. — Prophecy of calamity to Dante.

In that part of the young year when the sun tempers his locks beneath Aquarius,[1] and now the nights decrease toward half the day,[2] when the hoar frost copies on the ground the image of her white sister,[3] but the point of her pen lasts little while, the rustic, whose provision fails "gets up up and sees the plain all whitened o'er, whereat he strikes his thigh, returns indoors, and grumbles here and there, like the poor wretch who knows not what to do; again goes out and picks up hope again, seeing the world to have changed face in short while, and takes his crook and drives forth his flock to pasture": in like manner the Master made me dismayed, when I saw his front so disturbed, and in like manner speedily arrived the plaster for the hurt. For when we came to the ruined bridge, the Leader turned to me with that sweet look which I first saw at the foot of the mount.[4] He opened his arms, after some counsel taken with himself, looking first well at the ruin, and laid hold of me. And as one who acts and considers, who seems always to be ready beforehand, so lifting me up toward the top of a great rock, he took note of another splinter, saying, "Seize hold next on that, but try first if it is such that it may support thee." It was no way for one clothed in a cloak, for we with difficulty, he light and I pushed up, could mount from jag to jag. And had it not been that on that precinct the bank was shorter than on the other side, I do not know about him, but I should have been completely overcome. But because all Malebolge slopes toward the opening of the lowest abyss, the site of each valley is such that one side rises and the other sinks.[5] We came, however, at length, up to the point where the last stone is broken off. The breath was so milked from my lungs when I was up that I could no farther, but sat me down on first arrival.

[1] Toward the end of winter.

[2] Half of the twenty-four hours.

[3] The frost copies the look of the snow, but her pen soon loses its cut, that is, the white frost soon vanishes.

[4] The hill of the first Canto, at the foot of which Virgil had appeared to Dante.

[5] The level of the whole circle slopes toward the central deep, so that the inner side of each pit is of less height than the outer.

"Now it behoves thee thus to put off sloth," said the Master, "for, sitting upon down or under quilt, one attains not fame, without which he who consumes his life leaves of himself such trace on earth as smoke in air, or in water the foam.

And therefore rise up, conquer the exhaustion with the spirit that conquers every battle, if by its heavy body it be not dragged down. A longer stairway needs must be ascended; it is not enough from these to have departed; if thou understandest me, now act so that it avail thee." Then I rose up, showing myself furnished better with breath than I felt, and said, "Go on, for I am strong and resolute."

Up along the crag we took the way, which was rugged, narrow, and difficult, and far steeper than the one before. I was going along speaking in order not to seem breathless, and a voice, unsuitable for forming words, came out from the next ditch. I know not what it said, though I was already upon the back of the arch that crosses here; but he who was speaking seemed moved to anger. I had turned downwards, but living eyes could not go to the bottom, because of the obscurity. Wherefore I said, "Master, see that thou go on to the next girth, and let us descend the wall, for as from hence I hear and do not understand, so I look down and shape out nothing." "Other reply," he said, "I give thee not than doing, for an honest request ought to be followed by the deed in silence."

We descended the bridge at its head, where it joins on with the eighth bank, and then the pit was apparent to me. And I saw therewithin a terrible heap of serpents, and of such hideous look that the memory still curdles my blood. Let Libya with her sand vaunt herself no more; for though she brings forth chelydri, jaculi, and phareae, and cenchri with amphisboena, she never, with all Ethiopia, nor with the land that lies on the Red Sea, showed either so many plagues or so evil.

Amid this cruel and most dismal store were running people naked and in terror, without hope of hole or heliotrope.[1] They had their hands tied behind with serpents, which fixed through the reins their tail and their head, and were knotted up in front.

[1] A precious stone, of green color, spotted with red, supposed to make its wearer invisible.

And lo! at one, who was on our side, darted a serpent that transfixed him there where the neck is knotted to the shoulders. Nor *O* nor *I* was ever so quickly written as he took fire and burned, and all ashes it behoved him to become in falling. And when upon the ground he lay thus destroyed, the dust drew together of itself, and into that same one instantly returned. Thus by the great sages it is affirmed that the Phoenix dies, and then is reborn when to her five hundredth year she draws nigh. Nor herb nor grain she feeds on in her life, but only on tears of incense and on balsam, and nard and myrrh are her last winding-sheet.

And as he who falls and knows not how, by force of demon that drags him to ground, or of other attack that seizeth the man; when he arises and around him

gazes, all bewildered by the great anguish that he has suffered, and in looking sighs, such was that sinner after he had risen. Oh power of God! how just thou art that showerest down such blows for vengeance!

The Leader asked him then who he was; whereon he answered, “I rained from Tuscany short time ago into this fell gullet. Bestial life, and not human, pleased me, like a mule that I was. I am Vanni Fucci, beast, and Pistoia was my fitting den.” And I to my Leader, “Tell him not to budge, and ask what sin thrust him down here, for I have seen him a man of blood and rages.” And the sinner who heard dissembled not, but directed toward me his mind and his face, and was painted with dismal shame. Then he said, “More it grieves me, that thou hast caught me in the misery where thou seest me, than when I was taken from the other life. I cannot refuse that which thou demandest. I am put so far down because I was robber of the sacristy with the fair furnishings, and falsely hitherto has it been ascribed to another.[1] But that thou enjoy not this sight, if ever thou shalt be forth of these dark places, open thine ears to my announcement and hear.[2] Pistoia first strips itself of the Black, then Florence renovates her people and her customs. Mars draws a flame from Val di Magra wrapped in turbid clouds, and with impetuous and bitter storm shall it be opposed upon Campo Piceno, where it shall suddenly rend the mist, so that every White shall thereby be smitten. And this have I said because it must grieve thee.”

[1] Vanni Fucci robbed the rich sacristy of the Church of St. James, the cathedral of Pistoia. Suspicion of the crime fell upon others, who, though innocent, were put to torture and hung for it.

[2] The following verses refer under their dark imagery to the two parties, the Black and the White, introduced from Pistoia, by which Florence was divided in the early years of the fourteenth century, and to their fightings. The prophecy is dismal to Dante, because it was with the Whites, whose overthrow Vanni Fucci foretells, that his own fortunes were linked.

CANTO XXV.

Eighth Circle: seventh pit: fraudulent thieves. — Cacus. — Agnel Brunelleschi and others.

At the end of his words the thief raised his hands with both the figs,[1] crying, “Take that, God! for at thee I square them.” Thenceforth the serpents were my friends, for then one coiled around his neck, as if it said, “I will not that thou say more,” and another round his arms and bound them up anew, clinching itself so in front that he could not give a shake with them. Ah Pistoia! Pistoia! why dost thou not decree to make ashes of thyself, so that thou mayest last no longer, since in evil-doing thou surpassest thine own seed?[2] Through all the dark circles of Hell I saw no spirit against God so proud, not he who fell at Thebes down from the walls.[3] He fled away and spake no word more.

[1] A vulgar mode of contemptuous defiance, thrusting out the fist with the thumb between the first and middle finger.

[2] According to tradition, Pistoia was settled by the followers of Catiline who escaped after his defeat.

[3] Capaneus; see Canto xiv.

And I saw a Centaur full of rage come crying out, “Where is, where is that obdurate one?” I do not think Maremma has so many snakes as he had upon his croup up to where our semblance begins. On his shoulders behind the nape a dragon with open wings was lying upon him, and it sets on fire whomsoever it encounters. My Master said, “This is Cacus, who beneath the rock of Mount Aventine made oftentimes a lake of blood. He goes not on one road with his brothers because of the fraudulent theft he committed of the great herd that was in his neighborhood; wherefor his crooked deeds ceased under the club of Hercules, who perhaps dealt him a hundred blows with it, and he felt not ten.”

While he was so speaking, and that one had run by, lo! three spirits came below us, of whom neither I nor my Leader was aware till when they cried out, “Who are ye?” whereon our story stopped, and we then attended only unto them. I did not recognize them, but it happened, as it is wont to happen by chance, that one must needs name the other, saying, “Cianfa, where can he have stayed?” Whereupon I, in order that the Leader should attend, put my finger upward from my chin to my nose.

If thou art now, Reader, slow to credit that which I shall tell, it will not be a marvel, for I who saw it hardly admit it to myself. As I was holding my brow raised upon them, lo! a serpent with six feet darts in front of one, and grapples close to him. With his middle feet he clasped his paunch, and with his forward took his arms, then struck his fangs in one and the other cheek. His hinder feet

he stretched upon the thighs, and put his tail between the two, and behind bent it up along the reins. Ivy was never so bearded to a tree, as the horrible beast through the other's limbs entwined his own. Then they stuck together as if they had been of hot wax, and mingled their color; nor one nor the other seemed now that which it was; even as before the flame, up along the paper a dark color proceeds which is not yet black, and the white dies away. The other two were looking on, and each cried, "O me! Agnello, how thou changest! Lo, now thou art neither two nor one! Now were the two heads become one, when there appeared to us two countenances mixed in one face wherein the two were lost. Of four [1] strips the two arms were made; the thighs with the legs, the belly and the chest became members that were never seen before. Each original aspect there was cancelled; both and neither the perverse image appeared, and such it went away with slow step.

[1] The two fore feet of the dragon and the two arms of the man were melted into two strange arms.

As the lizard under the great scourge of the dog days, changing from hedge to hedge, seems a flash, if it crosses the way, so seemed, coming toward the belly of the two others, a little fiery serpent, livid, and black as a grain of pepper. And that part whereby our nourishment is first taken it transfixed in one of them, then fell down stretched out before him. The transfixed one gazed at it, but said nothing; nay rather, with feet fixed, he yawned even as if sleep or fever had assailed him. He looked at the serpent, and that at him; one through his wound, the other through his mouth, smoked violently, and their smoke met. Let Lucan henceforth be silent, where he tells of the wretched Sabellus, and of Nasidius, and wait to hear that which now is uttered. Let Ovid be silent concerning Cadmus and Arethusa, for if, poetizing, he converts him into a serpent and her into a fountain, I envy him not; for two natures front to front never did he transmute, so that both the forms were prompt to exchange their matter. To one another they responded by such rules, that the serpent made his tail into a fork, and the wounded one drew together his feet. The legs and the very thighs with them so stuck together, that in short while the juncture made no sign that was apparent. The cleft tail took on the shape that was lost there, and its skin became soft, and that of the other hard. I saw the arms draw in through the armpits, and the two feet of the beast which were short lengthen out in proportion as those shortened. Then the hinder feet, twisted together, became the member that man conceals, and the wretched one from his had two[1] stretched forth.

[1] Hinder feet.

While the smoke is veiling both with a new color, and generates hair on the one, and from the other strips it, one rose up, and the other fell down, not however turning aside their pitiless lights,[1] beneath which each was changing his visage. He who was erect drew his in toward the temples, and, from the excess of material that came in there, issued the ears on the smooth cheeks; that which did not run backwards but was retained, of its superfluity made a nose for the face, and thickened the lips so far as was needful. He who was lying down drives his muzzle forward, and draws in his ears through his skull, as the snail doth his horns. And his tongue, which erst was united and fit for speech, cleaves itself, and the forked one of the other closes up; and the smoke stops. The soul that had become a brute fled hissing along the valley, and behind him the other speaking spits. Then he turned upon him his new shoulders, and said to the other,[2] "I will that Buoso[3] run, as I have done, groveling along this path."

[1] Glaring steadily at each other.

[2] The third of the three spirits, the only one unchanged.

[3] Buoso is he who has become a snake.

Thus I saw the seventh ballast[1] change and rechange, and here let the novelty be my excuse, if my pen straggle[2] a little. And although my eyes were somewhat confused, and my mind bewildered, those could not flee away so covertly but that I clearly distinguished Puccio Sciancato, and he it was who alone, of the three companions that had first come, was not changed; the other[3] was he whom thou, Gaville, weepest.

[1] The ballast, — the sinners in the seventh bolgia.

[2] Run into unusual detail.

[3] One Francesco Guerelo de' Cavalcanti, who was slain by men of the little Florentine town of Gaville, and for whose death cruel vengeance was taken. The three who had first come were the three Florentine thieves, Agnello, Buoso, and Puccio. Cianfa Donati had then appeared as the serpent with six feet, and had been incorporated with Agnello. Lastly came Guercio Cavalcanti as a little snake, and changed form with Buoso.

CANTO XXVI.

Eighth Circle: eighth pit fraudulent counselors. — Ulysses and Diomed.

Rejoice, Florence, since thou art so great that over sea and land thou beatest thy wings, and thy name is spread through Hell. Among the thieves I found five such, thy citizens, whereat shame comes to me, and thou unto great honor risest not thereby. But, if near the morning one dreams the truth, thou shalt feel within little time what Prato, as well as others, craves for thee.[1] And if now it were, it would not be too soon. Would that it were so! since surely it must be; for the more it will weigh on me the more I age.

[1] If that which I foresee is not a vain dream, the calamities which thine enemies crave for thee will soon be felt.

We departed thence, and up along the stairs that the bourns[1] had made for our descent before, my Leader remounted and dragged me. And pursuing the solitary way mid the splinters and rocks of the crag, the foot without the hand sped not. Then I grieved, and now I grieve again when I direct my mind to what I saw; and I curb my genius more than I am wont, that it may not run unless virtue guide it; so that if a good star, or better thing, has given me of good, I may not grudge it to myself.

[1] The projections of the rocky wall.

As the rustic who rests him on the bill in the season when he that brightens the world keepeth his face least hidden from us, what time the fly yieldeth to the gnat,[1] sees many fireflies down in the valley, perhaps there where he makes his vintage and ploughs, — with as many flames all the eighth pit was resplendent, as I perceived soon as I was there where the bottom became apparent. And as he[2] who was avenged by the bears saw the chariot of Elijah at its departure, when the horses rose erect to heaven, and could not so follow it with his eyes as to see aught save the flame alone, even as a little cloud, mounting upward: thus each[3] was moving through the gulley of the ditch, for not one shows its theft, and every flame steals away a sinner.[4]

[1] That is, in the summer twilight. Elisha.

[2] Kings ii. 9-24.

[3] Of those flames.

[4] Within each flame a sinner was concealed.

I was standing on the bridge, risen up to look, so that if I had not taken hold of a rock I should have fallen below without being pushed. And the Leader, who

saw me thus attent, said, “Within these fires are the spirits; each is swathed by that wherewith he is enkindled.” “My Master,” I replied, “by hearing thee am I more certain, but already I deemed that it was so, and already I wished to say to thee, Who is in that fire that cometh so divided at its top that it seems to rise from the pyre on which Eteocles was put with his brother?” [1] He answered me, “There within are tormented Ulysses and Diomed, and thus together they go in punishment, as of old in wrath.[2] And within their flame they groan for the ambush of the horse that made the gate, whence the gentle seed of the Romans issued forth. Within it they lament for the artifice whereby the dead Deidamia still mourns for Achilles, and there for the Palladium they bear the penalty.” “If they can speak within those sparkles,” said I, “Master, much I pray thee, and repray that the prayer avail a thousand, that thou make not to me denial of waiting till the horned flame come hither; thou seest that with desire I bend me toward it.” And he to me, “Thy prayer is worthy of much praise, and therefore I accept it, but take heed that thy tongue restrain itself. Leave speech to me, for I have conceived what thou wishest, for, because they are Greeks, they would be shy, perchance, of thy words.”[3]

[1] Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Oedipus and Jocaste, who, contending at the siege of Thebes, slew each other. Such was their mutual hate that, when their bodies were burned on the same funeral pile, the flames divided in two.

— ezundant diviso vertice flammae Alternosque apices abrupta luce coruscant. Statius, Thebaid, xii, 431-2.

[2] Against the Trojans. It was through the stratagem of the wooden horse that Troy was destroyed, and Aeneas thus compelled to lead forth his followers who became the seed of the Romans. Deidamia was the wife of Achilles, who slew herself for grief at his desertion and departure for Troy, which had been brought about by the deceit of Ulysses and Diomed. The Palladium was the statue of Athena, on which the safety of Troy depended, stolen by the two heroes.

[3] The ancient heroes might be averse to talking with a man of the strange modern world.

When the flame had come there where it seemed to my Leader time and place, in this form I heard him speak to it: “O ye who are two within one fire, if I deserved of you while I lived, if I deserved of you much or little, when in the world I wrote the lofty verses, move not, but let one of you tell us, where, having lost himself, he went away to die.” The greater horn of the ancient flame began to waver, murmuring, even as a flame that the wind wearies. Then moving its tip hither and thither, as it had been the tongue that would speak, it cast forth a voice, and said, —

“When I departed from Circe, who had retained me more than a year there near to Gaeta, before Aeneas had so named it, neither fondness for my son, nor piety for my old father, nor the due love that should have made Penelope glad, could overcome within me the ardor that I had to gain experience of the world, and of the vices of men, and of their valor. But I put forth on the deep, open sea,

with one vessel only, and with that little company by which I had not been deserted. One shore and the other[1] I saw as far as Spain, far as Morocco and the island of Sardinia, and the rest which that sea bathes round about. I and my companions were old and slow when we came to that narrow strait where Hercules set up his bounds, to the end that man may not put out beyond.[2] On the right hand I left Seville, on the other already I had left Ceuta. 'O brothers,' said I, 'who through a hundred thousand perils have reached the West, to this so little vigil of your senses that remains be ye unwilling to deny, the experience, following the sun, of the world that hath no people. Consider ye your origin; ye were not made to live as brutes, but for pursuit of virtue and of knowledge.' With this little speech I made my companions so eager for the road that hardly afterwards could I have held them back. And turning our stern to the morning, with our oars we made wings for the mad flight, always gaining on the left hand side. The night saw now all the stars of the other pole, and ours so low that it rose not forth from the ocean floor. Five times rekindled and as many quenched was the light beneath the moon, since we had entered on the deep pass, when there appeared to us a mountain dim through the distance, and it appeared to me so high as I had not seen any. We rejoiced thereat, and soon it turned to lamentation, for from the strange land a whirlwind rose, and struck the fore part of the vessel. Three times it made her whirl with all the waters, the fourth it made her stern lift up, and the prow go down, as pleased Another, till the sea had closed over us."

[1] Of the Mediterranean.

[2] Piu oltre non; the famous Ne plus ultra, adopted as his motto by Charles V.

CANTO XXVII.

Eighth Circle: eighth pit fraudulent counselors. — Guido da Montefeltro.

Now was the flame erect and quiet, through not speaking more, and now was going from us, with the permission of the sweet poet, when another that was coming behind it made us turn our eyes to its tip, by a confused sound that issued forth therefrom. As the Sicilian bull [1] — that bellowed first with the plaint of him (and that was right) who had shaped it with his file — was wont to bellow with the voice of the sufferer, so that, although it was of brass, yet it appeared transfixed with pain, thus, through not at first having way or outlet from the fire, the disconsolate words were converted into its language. But when they had taken their course up through the point, giving it that vibration which the tongue had given in their passage, we heard say, "O thou, to whom I direct my voice, thou that wast just speaking Lombard,[2] saying, 'Now go thy way, no more I urge thee,' although I may have arrived perchance somewhat late, let it not irk thee to stop to speak with me, behold, it irks not me, and I am burning. If thou but now into this blind world art fallen from that sweet Italian land whence I bring all my sin, tell me if the Romagnuoli have peace or war; for I was from the mountains there between Urbino and the chain from which Tiber is unlocked."[3]

[1] The brazen bull of Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, made to hold criminals to be burned within it. Perillus, its inventor, was the first to suffer. So these sinners are wrapped in the flames which their fraudulent counsels had prepared for them.

[2] Lombard, because the words were those of Virgil, whose "parents were Lombards," and in speaking he had used a form peculiar to the Lombard dialect.

[3] It is the spirit of the Ghibelline count, Guido da Montefeltro, a famous freebooting captain, who speaks.

I was still downward attent and leaning over when my Leader touched me on the side, saying, "Speak thou, this is an Italian." And I, who even now had my answer ready, without delay began to speak, "O soul, that art hidden there below, thy Romagna is not, and never was, without war in the hearts of her tyrants, but open war none have I left there now. Ravenna is as it hath been for many years; the eagle of Polenta[1] is brooding there, so that he covers Cervia with his wings. The city[2] that made erewhile the long struggle, and of the French a bloody heap, finds itself again beneath the green paws. And the old mastiff and the new of Verrucchio,[3] who made the ill disposal of Montagna, make an anger of their teeth there where they are wont. The little lion of the white lair[4] governs the city of Lamone and of Santerno, and changes side from summer to winter. And she[5] whose flank the Savio bathes, even as she sits between the plain and

the mountain, lives between tyranny and a free state. Now who thou art, I pray thee that thou tell us; be not harder than another hath been,[6] so may thy name in the world hold front."

[1] Guido Novello da Polenta had been lord of Ravenna since 1275. He was father of Francesca da Rimini, and a friend of Dante. His shield bore an eagle, gules, on a field, or. Cervia is a small town on the coast, not far from Ravenna.

[2] Forli, where in 1282 Guido da Montefeltro had defeated, with great slaughter, a troop, largely of French soldiers, sent against him by Pope Martin III. It was now ruled by the Ordelaffi, whose shield, party per fess, bore on its upper half, or, a demilion, vert.

[3] Malatesta, father and son, rulers of Rimini; father and brother of the husband and of the lover of Francesca da Rimim. They had cruelly put to death Montagna di Parcitade, the head of the Ghibellines of Rimini; and they ruled as tyrants, sucking the blood of their subjects.

[4] This is Maghinardo da Susinana, who bore a lion azure on a field argent.

[5] The city of Cesena.

[6] Refuse not to answer me as I have answered thee.

After the fire had somewhat roared according to its fashion, the sharp point moved this way and that, and then gave forth this breath: "If I could believe that my answer might be to a person who should ever return unto the world, this flame would stand without more quiverings; but inasmuch as, if I hear truth, never from this depth did any living man return, without fear of infamy I answer thee.

"I was a man of arms, and then became a cordelier, trusting, thus girt, to make amends; and surely my trust had been fulfilled but for the Great Priest,[1] whom may ill betide! who set me back into my first sins; and how and wherefore, I will that thou hear from me. While I was that form of bone and flesh that my mother gave me, my works were not leonine, but of the fox. The wily practices, and the covert ways, I knew them all, and I so plied their art that to the earth's end the sound went forth. When I saw me arrived at that part of my age where every one ought to strike the sails and to coil up the ropes, what erst was pleasing to me then gave me pain, and I yielded me repentant and confessed. Alas me wretched! and it would have availed. The Prince of the new Pharisees having war near the Lateran,[2] — and not with Saracens nor with Jews, for every enemy of his was Christian, and none of them had been to conquer Acre,[3] nor a trafficker in the land of the Soldan, — regarded in himself neither his supreme office, nor the holy orders, nor in me that cord which is wont to make those girt with it more lean; but as Constantine besought Sylvester within Soracte to cure his leprosy,[4] so this one besought me as master to cure his proud fever. He asked counsel of me, and I kept silence, because his words seemed drunken. And then he said to me, 'Let not thy heart mistrust; from now I absolve thee, and do thou teach me to act so that I may throw Palestrina to the ground. Heaven can I lock and unlock,

as thou knowest; for two are the keys that my predecessor held not dear.' Then his grave arguments pushed me to where silence seemed to me the worst, and I said, 'Father, since thou washest me of that sin wherein I now must fall, long promise with short keeping will make thee triumph on the High Seat.' Francis[5] came for me afterwards, when I was dead, but one of the Black Cherubim said to him, 'Bear him not away; do me not wrong; he must come down among my drudges because he gave the fraudulent counsel, since which till now I have been at his hair; for he who repents not cannot be absolved, nor can repentance and will exist together, because of the contradiction that allows it not.' O woeful me! how I shuddered when he took me, saying to me, 'Perhaps thou didst not think that I was a logician.' To Minos he bore me; and he twined his tail eight times round his hard back, and, after he had bitten it in great rage, he said, 'This is one of the sinners of the thievish fire.' Therefore I, where thou seest, am lost, and going thus robed I rankle." When he had thus completed his speech the flame, sorrowing, departed, twisting and flapping its sharp horn.

[1] Boniface VIII.

[2] With the Colonna family, whose stronghold was Palestrina.

[3] Not one had been a renegade, to help the Saracens at the siege of Acre in 1291.

[4] It was for this service that Constantine was supposed to have made Sylvester "the first rich Father." See Canto xiv. His predecessor, Celestine V., had renounced the papacy.

[5] St. Francis came for his soul, as that of one of the brethren of his Order.

We passed onward, I and my Leader, along the crag, far as upon the next arch that covers the ditch in which the fee is paid by those who, sowing discord, win their burden.

CANTO XXVIII.

Eighth Circle: ninth pit: sowers of discord and schism. — Mahomet and Ali. — Fra Dolcino. — Pier da Medicina. -Curio. — Mosca. — Bertrau de Born.

Who, even with words unfettered,[1] could ever tell in full of the blood and of the wounds that I now saw, though many times narrating? Every tongue assuredly would come short, by reason of our speech and our memory that have small capacity to comprise so much.

[1] In prose.

If all the people were again assembled, that of old upon the fateful land of Apulia lamented for their blood shed by the Trojans,[1] and in the long war that made such high spoil of the rings,[2] as Livy writes, who erreth not; with those that, by resisting Robert Guiscard,[3] felt the pain of blows, and the rest whose bones are still heaped up at Ceperano,[4] where every Apullan was false, and there by Tagliacozzo,[5] where without arms the old Alardo conquered, — and one should show his limb pierced through, and one his lopped off, it would be nothing to equal the grisly mode of the ninth pit.

[1] The Romans, descendants of the Trojans.

[2] The spoils of the battle of Canon, in the second Punic War.

[3] The Norman conqueror and Duke of Apulia. He died in 1085.

[4] Where, in 1266, the leaders of the army of Manfred, King of Apulia and Sicily, treacherously went over to Charles of Anjou.

[5] Here, in 1265, Conradin, the nephew of Manfred, was defeated and taken prisoner. The victory was won by a stratagem devised by Count Erard de Valery.

Truly cask, by losing mid-board or cross-piece, is not so split open as one I saw cleft from the chin to where the wind is broken: between his legs were hanging his entrails, his inner parts were visible, and the dismal sack that makes ordure of what is swallowed. Whilst all on seeing him I fix myself, he looked at me, and with his hands opened his breast, saying, “Now see how I rend myself, see how mangled is Mahomet. Ali [1] goeth before me weeping, cleft in the face from chin to forelock; and all the others whom thou seest here were, when living, sowers of scandal and of schism, and therefore are they so cleft. A devil is here behind, that adjusts us so cruelly, putting again to the edge of the sword each of this crew, when we have turned the doleful road, because the wounds are closed up ere one passes again before him. But thou, who art thou, that musest on the crag, perchance to delay going to the punishment that is adjudged on thine own accusations?” [2] “Nor death hath reached him yet,” replied my Master, “nor

doth sin lead him to torment him; but, in order to give him full experience, it behoves me, who am dead, to lead him through Hell down here, from circle to circle; and this is true as that I speak to thee."

[1] Cousin and son-in-law of Mahomet, and himself the head of a schism.

[1] When the soul appears before Minos, every sin is confessed. See Canto V.

More than a hundred there were that, when they heard him, stopped in the ditch to look at me, forgetting the torment in their wonder. "Now, say to Fra Dolcino,[1] then, thou who perchance shalt shortly see the sun, if he wish not soon to follow me here, so to arm himself with supplies that stress of snow bring not the victory to the Novarese, which otherwise to gain would not be easy": — after he had lifted one foot to go on Mahomet said to me these words, then on the ground he stretched it to depart.

[1] A noted heretic and reformer, who for two years maintained himself in Lombardy against the forces of the Pope, but finally, being reduced by famine in time of snow, in 1807, was taken captive and burnt at Novara.

Another who had his throat pierced and his nose cut off up under his brows, and had but one ear only, having stopped to look in wonder with the rest, before the rest opened his gullet, which outwardly was all crimson, and said, "O thou whom sin condemns not, and whom of old I saw above in the Latian land, if too great resemblance deceive me not, remember Pier da Medicina [1] if ever thou return to see the sweet plain that from Vercelli slopes to Marcabb, and make known to the two best of Fano, to Messer Guido and likewise to Angiolello,[2] that, if foresight here be not vain, they will be cast forth from their vessel and drowned near to the Cattolica, by treachery of a fell tyrant. Between the islands of Cyprus and Majorca Neptune never saw so great a crime, not of the pirates, nor of the Argolic people. That traitor who sees only with one eye, and holds the city from sight of which one who is here with me would fain have fasted,[3] will make them come to parley with him; then will act so that against the wind of Focara[4] they will not need or vow or prayer." And I to him, "Show to me and declare, if thou wishest that I carry up news of thee, who is he of the bitter sight?"[5] Then he put his hand on the jaw of one of his companions, and opened the mouth of him, crying, "This is he, and he speaks not; this outcast stifled the doubt in Caesar, by affirming that the man prepared always suffered harm from delay." Oh, how dismayed, with his tongue slit in his gorge, seemed to me Curio,[6] who in speech had been so hardy!

[1] Medicina is a town in the Bolognese district. Piero was a fosterer of discord.

[2] Guido del Cassero and Angiolello da Cagnano, treacherously drowned by order of the one-eyed Malatestino, lord of Rimini.

[3] The city of Rimini, which Curio would wish never to have seen.

[4] A high foreland near the Cattolica, between Rimini and Fano, whence often fell dangerous squalls.

[5] He to whom the sight of Rimini had been bitter.

[6] Curio the Tribune, banished from Rome, fled to Caesar delaying to cross the Rubicon, and urged him on, with the argument, according to Lucan, “Tolle moras, semper nocuit differre paratis.” Phars. i. 281.

And one who had both hands lopped off, lifting the stumps through the murky air so that the blood made his face foul, cried out, “Thou shalt remember Mosca,[1] too, who said, alas! ‘Thing done has an end,’ which was the seed of ill for the Tuscan people.” And I added thereto, “And death to thine own race.” Whereat he, accumulating woe on woe, went away like a person sad and distracted.

[1] In 1215 one of the Buondelmonti, plighted to a maiden of the Amidei, broke faith, and engaged himself to a damsel of the Donati. The family of the girl who had been thus slighted took counsel how to avenge the affront, and Mosca de’ Lamberti gave the ill advice to murder the young Buondelmonte. The murder was the beginning of long woe to Florence, and of the division of her people into Guelphs and Ghibellines.

But I remained to look at the crowd, and I saw a thing that I should be afraid, without more proof, only to tell, were it not that conscience reassures me, the good companion that emboldens man under the hauberk of feeling himself pure. I saw in truth, and still I seem to see it, a trunk without a head going along even as the others of the dismal flock were going. And it was holding the cut-off head by its hair, dangling in hand like a lantern. And it gazed on us, and said, “O me!” Of itself it was making for itself a lamp; and they were two in one, and one in two. How it can be He knows who so ordains. When it was right at the foot of the bridge, it lifted its arm high with the whole head, in order to approach its words to us, which were, “Now see the dire punishment, thou that, breathing, goest seeing the dead: see thou if any other is great as this! And that thou mayest carry news of me, know that I am Bertran de Born,[1] he that gave to the young king the ill encouragements. I made father and son rebellious to each other. Ahithophel did not more with Absalom and with David by his wicked goadings. Because I divided persons so united, I bear my brain, alas! divided from its source which is in this trunk. Thus retaliation is observed in me.”

[1] The famous troubadour who incited the young Prince Henry to rebellion against his father, Henry II. of England. The prince died in 1183.

CANTO XXIX.

Eighth Circle ninth pit. — Geri del Bello. — Tenth pit: falsifiers of all sorts. — Griffolino of Arezzo. — Capocchio.

The many people and the diverse wounds had so inebriated mine eyes that they were fain to stay for weeping. But Virgil said to me, “What art thou still watching? why is thy sight still fixed down there among the dismal mutilated shades? Thou hast not done so at the other pits; consider if thou thinkest to count them, that the valley circles two and twenty miles; and already the moon is beneath our feet; the time is little now that is conceded to us, and other things are to be seen than thou seest.” “If thou hadst,” replied I thereupon, “attended to the reason why I was looking perhaps thou wouldst have permitted me yet to stay.”

Meanwhile my Leader went on, and I behind him went, already waking reply, and adding, “Within that cavern where I just now was holding my eyes so fixedly, I think that a spirit of my own blood weeps the sin that down there costs so dear.” Then said the Master, “Let not thy thought henceforth reflect on him; attend to other thing, and let him there remain, for I saw him at the foot of the little bridge pointing at thee, and threatening fiercely with his finger, and I heard him called Geri del Bello.[1] Thou wert then so completely engaged on him who of old held Hautefort[2] that thou didst not look that way till he had departed.” “O my Leader,” said I, “the violent death which is not yet avenged for him by any who is sharer in the shame made him indignant, wherefore, as I deem, he went on without speaking to me, and thereby has he made me pity him the more.”

[1] A cousin or uncle of Dante’s father, of whom little is known but what may be inferred from Dante’s words and from the place he assigns him in Hell.

[2] Bertran de Born, lord of Hautefort.

Thus we spake far as the place on the crag which first shows the next valley, if more light were there, quite to the bottom. When we were above the last cloister of Malebolge so that its lay brothers could appear to our sight, divers lamentations pierced me, that had their arrows barbed with pity; wherefore I covered my ears with my hands.

Such pain as there would be if, between July and September, from the hospitals of Valdichiana and of Maremma and of Sardinia[1] the sick should all be in one ditch together, such was there here; and such stench came forth therefrom, as is wont to come from putrescent limbs. We descended upon the last bank of the long crag, ever to the left hand, and then my sight became more vivid down

toward the bottom, where the ministress of the High Lord — infallible Justice — punishes the falsifiers whom on earth she registers.

[1] Unhealthy regions, noted for the prevalence of malarial fevers in summer.

I do not think it was a greater sorrow to see the whole people in Egina sick, when the air was so full of pestilence that the animals, even to the little worm, all fell dead (and afterwards the ancient people, according as the poets hold for sure, were restored by seed of ants), than it was to see the spirits languishing in different heaps through that dark valley. This one over the belly, and that over the shoulders of another was lying, and this one, crawling, was shifting himself along the dismal path. Step by step we went without speech, looking at and listening to the sick, who could not lift their persons.

I saw two seated leaning on each other, as pan is leaned against pan to warm, spotted from head to foot with scabs; and never did I see currycomb plied by a boy for whom his lord is waiting nor by one who keeps awake unwillingly, as each often plied the bite of his nails upon himself, because of the great rage of his itching which has no other relief. And the nails dragged down the scab, even as a knife the scales of bream or of other fish that may have them larger.

"O thou, that with thy fingers dost dismail thyself," began my Leader unto one of them, "and who sometimes makest pincers of them, tell me if any Latian[1] is among those who are here within: so may thy nails suffice thee eternally for this work." "Latians are we whom here thou seest so defaced, both of us," replied one weeping, "but thou, who art thou that hast asked of us?" And the Leader said, "I am one that descends with this living man down from ledge to ledge, and I intend to show Hell to him." Then their mutual support was broken; and trembling each turned to me, together with others that heard him by rebound. The good Master inclined himself wholly toward me, saying, "Say to them what thou wilt;" and I began, since he was willing, "So may memory of you not steal away in the first world from human minds, but may it live under many suns, tell me who ye are, and of what race; let not your disfiguring and loathsome punishment fright you from disclosing yourselves unto me." "I was from Arezzo," replied one of them,[2] "and Albero of Siena had me put in the fire; but that for which I died brings me not here. True it is that I said to him, speaking in jest, I knew how to raise myself through the air in flight, and he, who had vain desire and little wit, wished that I should show him the art, and only because I did not make him Daedalus, made me be burned by one[3] that held him as a son; but to the last pit of the ten, for the alchemy that I practiced in the world, Minos, to whom it is not allowed to err, condemned me." And I said to the Poet, "Now was ever people so vain as the Sienese? surely not so the French

by much." Whereon the other leprous one, who heard me, replied to my words, "Except[4] Stricca who knew how to make moderate expenditure, and Niccolo, who first invented the costly custom of the clove[5] in the garden where such seed takes root; and except the brigade in which Caccia of Asciano wasted his vineyard and his great wood, and the Abbagliato showed his wit. But that thou mayest know who thus seconds thee against the Sienese, so sharpen thine eye toward me that my face may answer well to thee, so shalt thou see that I am the shade of Capocchio, who falsified the metals by alchemy; and thou shouldst recollect, if I descry thee aright, how I was a good ape of nature."

[1] Italian.

[2] This is supposed to be one Griffolino, of whom nothing is known but what Dante tells.

[3] The Bishop of Siena.

[4] Ironical; these youths all being members of the company known as the brigata godereccia or spendereccia, the joyous or spendthrift brigade.

[5] The use of rich and expensive spices in cookery.

CANTO XXX.

Eighth Circle: tenth pit: falsifiers of all sorts. — Myrrha. — Gianni Schicchi. — Master Adam. — Sinon of Troy.

At the time when Juno was wroth because of Semele against the Theban blood, as she showed more than once, Athamas became so insane, that seeing his wife come laden on either hand with her two sons, cried out, “Spread we the nets, so that I may take the lioness and the young lions at the pass,” and then he stretched out his pitiless talons, taking the one who was named Learchus, and whirled him and struck him on a rock; and she drowned herself with her other burden. And when Fortune turned downward the all-daring loftiness of the Trojans, so that together with the kingdom the king was undone, Hecuba, sad, wretched, and captive, when she saw Polyxena dead, and woeful descried her Polydorus on the sea-bank, frantic, barked like a dog, — to such degree had grief distraught her mind.

But neither the furies of Thebes, nor the Trojan, were ever seen toward any one so cruel, whether in goading beasts or human limbs,[1] as I saw two shades pallid and naked who, biting, were running in the way that a boar does when from the sty he breaks loose. One came at Capocchio, and on the nape of his neck struck his teeth, so that dragging him he made his belly scratch along the solid bottom. And the Aretine,[2] who remained trembling, said to me, “That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and rabid he goes thus maltreating others.” “Oh,” said I to him, “so may time other not fix his teeth on thee, let it not weary thee to tell who it is ere it start hence.” And he to me, “That is the ancient soul of profligate Myrrha, who became her father’s lover beyond rightful love. She came to sinning with him by falsifying herself in another’s form, even as the other, who goes off there, undertook, in order to gain the lady of the herd,[3] to counterfeit Buoso Donati, making a will and giving to the will due form.”

[1] No mad rages were ever so merciless as those of these furious spirits.

[2] Griffolino.

[3] Buoso Donati had died without making a will, whereupon his nephew suborned Gianni Schicchi to personate the dead man in bed, and to dictate a will in his favor. This Gianni did, but with a clause leaving to himself a favorite mare of Buoso’s, the best in all Tuscany.

And after the two rabid ones upon whom I had kept my eye had disappeared, I turned it to look at the other miscreants. I saw one made in fashion of a lute, had he but only had his groin cut off at the part where man is forked. The heavy hydropsy which, with the humor that it ill digests, so unmates the members that

the face corresponds not with the belly, was making him hold his lips open as the hectic does, who for thirst turns one toward his chin, the other upward.

"Oh ye, who are without any punishment, and I know not why, in the dismal world," said he to us, "look and attend to the misery of Master Adam. Living, I had enough of what I wished, and now, alas! I long for a drop of water. The rivulets that from the green hills of the Casentino descend into the Arno, making their channels cool and soft, stand ever before me, and not in vain; for their image dries me up far more than the disease which strips my face of flesh. The rigid justice that scourges me draws occasion from the place where I sinned to put my sighs the more in flight. There is Romena, where I falsified the alloy stamped with the Baptist,[1] for which on earth I left my body burned. But if here I could see the wretched soul of Guido or of Alessandro, or of their brother,[2] for Fount Branda[3] I would not give the sight. One of them is here within already, if the rating shades who go around speak true. But what does it avail me who have my limbs bound? If I were only yet so light that in a hundred years I could go an inch, I should already have set out along the path, seeking for him among this disfigured folk, although it circles round eleven miles, and is not less than half a mile across. Because of them I am among such a family; they induced me to strike the forms that had full three carats of base metal." And I to him, "Who are the two poor wretches that are smoking like a wet hand in winter, lying close to your confines on the right?" "Here I found them," he answered, "when I rained down into this trough, and they have not since given a turn, and I do not believe they will give one to all eternity. One is the false woman that accused Joseph, the other is the false Sinon the Greek, from Troy; because of their sharp fever they throw out such great reek."

[1] The florin which bore on the obverse the figure of John the Baptist, the protecting saint of Florence.

[2] Counts of Romena.

[3] The noted fountain in Siena, or perhaps one in Romena.

And one of them who took it ill perchance at being named so darkly, with his fist struck him on his stiff paunch; it sounded as if it were a drum; and Master Adam struck him on the face with his arm that did not seem less hard, saying to him, "Though, because of my heavy limbs, moving hence be taken from me, I have an arm free for such need." Whereon he replied, "When thou wast going to the fire thou hadst it not thus ready, but so and more thou hadst it when thou wast coining." And the hydropic, "Thou sayst true in this, but thou wast not so true a witness there where thou wast questioned of the truth at Troy." "If I spake false, thou didst falsify the coin," said Sinon, "and I am here for a single sin, and thou for more than any other demon." "Remember, perjured one, the horse,"

answered he who had the puffed up paunch, “and be it ill for thee that the whole world knows it.” “And be ill for thee the thirst which cracks thy tongue,” said the Greek, “and the putrid water that makes thy belly thus a hedge before thine eyes.” Then the coiner, “So yawns thy mouth for its own harm as it is wont, for if I am thirsty, and humor stuffs me out, thou hast the burning, and the head that pains thee, and to lick the mirror of Narcissus thou wouldst not want many words of invitation.”

To listen to them was I wholly fixed, when the Master said to me, “Now then look, for it wants but little that I quarrel with thee.” When I heard him speak to me with anger, I turned me toward him with such shame that still it circles through my memory. And as is he that dreams of his harm, and, dreaming, desires to dream, so that that which is he craves as if it were not, such I became, not being able to speak, for I desired to excuse myself, and I was indeed excusing myself, and did not think that I was doing it. “Less shame doth wash away a greater fault than thine hath been,” said the Master; therefore disburden thyself of all regret, and make reckoning that I am always at thy side, if again it happen that fortune find thee where people are in similar brawl; for the wish to hear it is a base wish.”

CANTO XXXI.

The Giants around the Eighth Circle. — Nimrod. — Ephialtes. — Antaeus sets the Poets down in the Ninth Circle.

One and the same tongue first stung me, so that it tinged both my cheeks, and then supplied the medicine to me. Thus do I hear[1] that the lance of Achilles and of his father was wont to be cause first of a sad and then of a good gift. We turned our back to the wretched valley,[2] up along the bank that girds it round, crossing without any speech. Here it was less than night and less than day, so that my sight went little forward; but I heard a horn sounding so loud that it would have made every thunder faint, which directed my eyes, following its course counter to it,[3] wholly to one place.

[1] Probably from Ovid, who more than once refers to the magic power of the spear which had been given to Peleus by Chiron. Shakespeare too had heard of it, and applies it, precisely as Dante does, to one

Whose smile and frown, like to Achilles' spear, Is able with the charge to kill and cure. 2 Henry VI. v. i.

[2] The tenth and last pit. My eyes went in the direction whence the sound came.

After the dolorous rout when Charlemagne lost the holy gest, Roland sounded not so terribly.[1] Shortwhile did I carry my head turned thitherward, when it seemed to me I saw many high towers; whereon I, "Master, say, what city is this?" And he to me, "Because too far away thou peerest through the darkness, it happens that thou dost err in thy imagining. Thou shalt see well, if thou arrivest there, how much the sense at distance is deceived; therefore somewhat more spur thyself on;" Then tenderly he took me by the hand, and said, "Before we go further forward, in order that the fact may seem less strange to thee, know that they are not towers, but giants, and they are in the abyss[2] round about the bank, from the navel downward, one and all of them."

[1] At Roncesvalles.

Rollanz ad mis l'olifan a sa buche, Empeint le bien, par grant vertut le sunet. Halt sunt li pui e la voiz est mult lunge, Granz xxx. liwes l'oirent-il respundre, Carles l'oit e ses cumpaignes tutes.

Chanson de Roland, 1753-57.

[2] The central deep of Hell, dividing the eighth circle from the ninth, — the lowest.

As when the mist is dissipating, the look little by little shapes out what the vapor that thickens the air conceals, so, as I pierced the gross and dark air as we drew nearer and nearer to the verge, error fled from me and fear grew upon me. For as above its circular enclosure Montereggione [1] crowns itself with towers, so with half their body the horrible giants, whom Jove still threatens from heaven when he thunders, betowered the bank that surrounds the abyss.

[1] The towers of Montereggione in ruin still crown its broken wall, and may be seen from the railroad not far from Siena, on the way to Florence.

And I discerned now the face of one, his shoulders, and his breast, and great part of his belly, and down along his sides both his arms. Nature, surely, when she left the art of such like creatures, did exceeding well in taking such executers from Mars; and if she repent not of elephants and of whales, he who looks subtly holds her more just and more discreet therefor;[1] for where the faculty of the mind is added to evil will and to power, the human race can make no defense against it. His face seemed to me long and huge as the pine-cone[2] of St. Peter at Rome, and in its proportion were his other bones; so that the bank, which was an apron from his middle downward, showed of him fully so much above, that to reach to his hair three Frieslanders[3] would have made ill vaunt. For I saw of him thirty great palms down from the place where one buckles his cloak.

[1] For no longer creating giants.

[2] Of bronze, that came from the Mausoleum of Hadrian, and in Dante's time stood in the fore-court of St. Peter's, and is now in the Vatican gardens.

[3] Supposed to be tall men.

"Raphel mai amech zabi almi," the fierce mouth, to which sweeter psalms were not befitting, began to cry. And my Leader toward him, "Foolish soul! Keep to thy horn, and with that vent thyself when anger or other passion touches thee; seek at thy neck, and thou wilt find the cord that holds it tied, O soul confused! and see it lying athwart thy great breast." Then he said to me, "He himself accuses himself; this is Nimrod, because of whose evil thought the world uses not one language only. Let us leave him, and let us not speak in vain, for so is every language to him, as his to others, which to no one is known."

Then turning to the left, we pursued our way, and at a crossbow's shot we found the next, far more fierce and larger. Who the master was for binding him I cannot tell; but he had his right arm fastened behind, and the other in front, by a chain that held him entwined from the neck downward, so that upon his uncovered part it was wound as far as the fifth coil. "This proud one wished to make trial of his power against the supreme Jove," said my Leader, "wherefore he has such reward; Ephialtes[1] is his name, and he made his great endeavors

when the giants made the Gods afraid; the arms which he plied he moves nevermore."

[1] Iphimedeia bore to Poseidon two sons, "but they were short-lived, godlike Otus and far-famed Ephialtes whom the fruitful Earth nourished to be the tallest and much the most beautiful of mortals except renowned Orion, for at nine years old they were nine cubits in breadth, and nine fathoms tall. They even threatened the immortals, raising the din of tumultuous war on Olympus, and strove to set Ossa upon Olympus and wood-clad Pelion upon Ossa, in order to scale heaven. But Jove destroyed them both." Odyssey, xi. 306-317.

And I to him, "If it may be, I should like my eyes to have experience of the huge Briareus." [1] Whereon he answered, "Thou shalt see Antaeus close at hand here, who speaks, and is unbound,[2] and will set us at the bottom of all sin. Him whom thou wishest to see is much farther on, and is bound and fashioned like this one, save that he seems more ferocious in his look."

[1] "Him of the hundred hands whom the Gods call Briareus." Iliad, i. 402.

[2] Because he took no part in the war of his brethren against the Gods. What Dante tells of him is derived from Lucan, Pharsalia, iv. 597 sqq.

Never was earthquake so mighty that it shook a tower as violently as Ephialtes was quick to shake himself. Then more than ever did I fear death; and there had been no need of more than the fright, if I had not seen his bonds. We then proceeded further forward, and came to Antaeus, who full five ells, besides his head, issued forth from the cavern. "O thou that, in the fateful valley which made Scipio the heir of glory when Hannibal and his followers turned their backs, didst bring of old a thousand lions for booty, — and it still seems credible that hadst thou been at the high war of thy brothers, the sons of the Earth would have conquered, — set us below, and disdain thou not to do so, where the cold locks up Cocytus. Make us not go to Tityus, nor to Typhon;[1] this one can give of that which here is longed for; [2] therefore stoop, and curl not thy snout. He yet can restore fame to thee in the world; for he is living, and still expects long life, if Grace doth not untimely call him to itself." Thus said the Master; and he in haste stretched out those hands, whose strong grip Hercules once felt, and took my Leader. Virgil, when he felt himself taken up, said to me, "Come hither so that I take thee." Then he made one bundle of himself and me. As beneath its leaning side, the Carisenda[3] seems to look when a cloud is going over so that the tower hangs counter to it, thus seemed Antaeus to me that stood attent to see him bend; and it was a moment when I could have wished to go by another road. But lightly on the bottom that swallows Lucifer with Judas he set us down; nor, thus bent, did he there make stay, and like a mast in a ship he raised himself.

[1] Lucan (Phars. iv. 600), naming these giants, says they were less strong than Antaeus; wherefore there is subtle flattery in these words of Virgil.

[2] To be remembered on earth.

[3] The more inclined of the two famous leaning towers at Bologna. As the cloud goes over it, the tower seems to bend to meet it. So Coleridge in his Ode to Dejection:

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars, That give sway their motion to the stars.

CANTO XXXII.

Ninth Circle: traitors. First ring: Caina. — Counts of Mangona. — Camicion de' Pazzi. — Second ring: Antenora. — Bocca degli Abati. — Buoso da Duera. — Count Ugolino.

If I had rhymes both harsh and raucous, such as would befit the dismal hole on which thrust[1] all the other rocks, I would press out the juice of my conception more fully; but since I have them not, not without fear I bring myself to speak; for to describe the bottom of the whole universe is no enterprise to take up in jest, nor a tongue that cries mamma or babbo. But may those Dames aid my verse who aided Amphion to close in Thebes; so that from the fact the speech be not diverse.

[1] Rest their weight.

O populace miscreant above all, that art in the place whereof to speak is hard, better had ye been here[1] or sheep or goats!

[1] On earth.

When we were down in the dark abyss beneath the feet of the giant, but far lower, and I was gazing still at the high wall, I heard say to me, "Beware how thou steppest; take heed thou trample not with thy soles the heads of the wretched weary brethren." Whereat I turned, and saw before me, and under my feet, a lake which through frost had semblance of glass and not of water.

The Danube in Austria makes not for its current so thick a veil in winter, nor the Don yonder under the cold sky, as there was here; for if Tambernich [1] had fallen thereupon, or Pietrapana,[2] it would not even at the edge have given a creak. And as to croak the frog lies with muzzle out of the water, what time[3] oft dreams the peasant girl of gleaning, so, livid up to where shame appears,[4] were the woeful shades within the ice, setting their teeth to the note of the stork.[5] Every one held his face turned downward; from the mouth the cold, and from the eyes the sad heart compels witness of itself among them.

[1] A mountain, the locality of which is unknown.

[2] One of the Toscan Apennines.

[3] In summer.

[4] Up to the face.

[5] Chattering with cold.

When I had looked round awhile, I turned to my feet, and saw two so close that they had the hair of their heads mixed together. "Tell me, ye who so press

tight your breasts," said I, "who are ye?" And they bent their necks, and after they had raised their faces to rue, their eyes, which before were moist only within, gushed up through the lids, and the frost bound the tears between them, and locked them up again. Clamp never girt board to board so strongly; wherefore they like two he goats butted together, such anger overcame them.

And one who had lost both his ears through the cold, still with his face downward, said to me, "Why dost thou so mirror thyself on us? If thou wouldst know who are these two, the valley whence the Bisenzio descends belonged to their father Albert, and to them.[1] From one body they issued, and all Caina[2] thou mayst search, and thou wilt not find shade more worthy to be fixed in ice; not he whose breast and shadow were broken by one and the same blow by the hand of Arthur;[3] not Focaccia;[4] not he who encumbers me with his head, so that I cannot see beyond, and was named Sassol Mascheroni:[5] if thou art Tuscan, well knowest thou now who he was. And that thou mayst not put me to more speech, know that I was Camicion de' Pazzi,[6] and I await Carlino that he may exonerate me."

[1] They were of the Alberti, counts of Mangona, in Tuscany, and had killed each other.

[2] The first division of this ninth and lowest circle of Hell.

[3] Mordred, the traitorous son of Arthur.

[4] From the crimes of Focaccia, a member of the great Cancellieri family of Pistoia, began the feud of the Black and the White factions, which long raged in Pistoia and in Florence.

[5] A Florentine who murdered his nephew for an inheritance.

[6] A murderer of one of his kinsmen, whose crime was surpassed by that of Carlino de' Pazzi, who, in 1302, betrayed a band of the Florentine exiles who had taken refuge in a stronghold of his in Valdarno.

Then I saw a thousand faces made currish by the cold, whence shuddering comes to me, and will always come, at frozen pools.

And while we were going toward the centre[1] to which tends every weight, and I was trembling in the eternal shade, whether it was will or destiny, or fortune I know not, but, walking among the heads, I struck my foot hard in the face of one. Wailing he cried out to me, "Why dost thou trample me? If thou comest not to increase the vengeance of Mont' Aperti, why dost thou molest me?" And I, "My Master, now wait here for me, so that I may free me from a doubt by means of this one, then thou shalt make me hasten as much as thou wilt." The Leader stopped, and I said to that shade who was bitterly blaspheming still, "Who art thou that thus railest at another?" "Now thou, who art thou, that goest through the Antenora,"[2] he answered, "smiting the cheeks of others, so that if thou wert alive, it would be too much?" "Alive I am, and it may be dear to thee," was my reply, "if thou demandest fame, that I should set thy name amid the other notes."

And he to me, “For the contrary do I long; take thyself hence, and give me no more trouble, for ill thou knowest to flatter on this plain.” Then I took him by the hair of the crown, and said, “It shall needs be that thou name thyself, or that not a hair remain upon thee here.” Whereon he to me, “Though thou strip me of hair, I will not tell thee who I am, nor will I show it to thee if a thousand times thou fallest on my head.”

[1] The centre of the earth.

[2] The second division of the ninth circle; so named after the Trojan who, though of good repute in Homer, was charged by a later tradition with having betrayed Troy.

I already had his hair twisted in my hand, and had pulled out more than one shock, he barking, with his eyes kept close down, when another cried out, “What ails thee, Bocca?[1] Is it not enough for thee to make music with thy jaws, but thou must bark? What devil has hold of thee?” “Now,” said I, “I would not have thee speak, accursed traitor, for to thy shame will I carry true news of thee.” “Begone,” he answered, “and relate what thou wilt, but be not silent, if from here within thou goest forth, of him who now had his tongue so ready. He weeps here the money of the French; I saw, thou canst say, him of Duera,[2] there where the sinners stand cooling. Shouldst thou be asked who else was there, thou hast at thy side that Beccheria [3] whose gorget Florence cut. Gianni del Soldanier [4] I think is farther on with Ganellon[5] and Tribaldello,[6] who opened Faenza when it was sleeping.”

[1] Bocca degli Abati, the most noted of Florentine traitors, who in the heat of the battle of Mont’ Aperti, in 1260, cut off the hand of the standard-bearer of the cavalry, so that the standard fell, and the Guelphs of Florence, disheartened thereby, were put to rout with frightful slaughter.

[2] Buoso da Duera of Cremona, who, for a bribe, let pass near Parma, without resistance, the cavalry of Charles of Anjou, led by Gui de Montfort to the conquest of Naples in 1265.

[3] Tesauro de’ Beccheria, Abbot of Vallombrosa, and Papal Legato, beheaded by the Florentines in 1258, because of his treacherous dealings with the exiled Ghibellines.

[4] A Ghibelline leader, who, after the defeat of Manfred in 1266, plotted against his own party.

[5] Ganellon, the traitor who brought about the defeat at Roncesvalles.

[6] He betrayed Faenza to the French, in 1282.

We had now parted from him when I saw two frozen in one hole, so that the head of one was a hood for the other. And as bread is devoured in hunger, so the uppermost one set his teeth upon the other where the brain joins with the nape. Not otherwise Tydeus gnawed for spite the temples of Menalippus than this one did the skull and the other parts. “O thou! that by so bestial a sign showest hatred against him whom thou dost eat, tell me the wherefore,” said I, “with this compact, that if thou rightfully of him complainest, I, knowing who ye are, and

his sin, may yet recompense thee for it in the world above, if that with which I speak be not dried up."

CANTO XXXIII.

Ninth circle: traitors. Second ring: Antenora. — Count Ugolino. — Third ring Ptolomaea. — Brother Alberigo. Branca d' Oria.

From his savage repast that sinner raised his mouth, wiping it with the hair of the head that he had spoiled behind: then he began, "Thou willest that I renew a desperate grief that oppresses my heart already only in thinking ere I speak of it. But, if my words are to be seed that may bear fruit of infamy for the traitor whom I gnaw, thou shalt see me speak and weep at once. I know not who thou art, nor by what mode thou art come down hither, but Florentine thou seemest to me truly when I hear thee. Thou hast to know that I was the Count Ugolino and he the Archbishop Ruggieri.[1] Now will I tell thee why I am such a neighbor. That by the effect of his evil thoughts, I, trusting to him, was taken and then put to death, there is no need to tell. But that which thou canst not have heard, namely, how cruel was my death, thou shalt hear, and shalt know if he hath wronged me.

[1] In July, 1288, Ugolino della Gherardesca, Count of Donoratico, head of a faction of the Guelphs in Pisa, in order to deprive Nino of Gallura, head of the opposing faction, of the lordship of the city, treacherously joined forces with the Archbishop Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, head of the Ghibellines, and drove Nino and his followers from the city. The archbishop thereupon took advantage of the weakening of the Guelphs and excited the populace against Ugolino, charging him with having for a bribe restored to Florence and Lucca some of their towns of which the Pisans had made themselves masters. He, with his followers, attacked Count Ugolino in his house, took him prisoner, with two of his sons and two of his grandsons, and shut them up in the Tower of the Gualandi, where in the following March, on the arrival of Count Guido da Montefeltro (see Canto xvii), as Captain of Pisa, they were starved to death.

"A narrow slit in the mew, which from me has the name of Famine, and in which others yet must be shut up, had already shown me through its opening many moons, when I had the bad dream that rent for me the veil of the future. "This one appeared to me master and lord, chasing the wolf and his whelps upon the mountain[1] for which the Pisans cannot see Lucca. With lean, eager, and trained hounds, Gualandi with Sismondi and with Lanfranchi[2] he had put before him at the front. After short course, the father and his sons seemed to me weary, and it seemed to me I saw their flanks torn by the sharp fangs.

[1] Monte San Giuliano.

[2] Three powerful Ghibelline families of Pisa.

"When I awoke before the morrow, I heard my sons, who were with me, wailing in their sleep, and asking for bread. Truly thou art cruel if already thou grievest not, thinking on what my heart foretold; and if thou weepest not, at what art thou wont to weep? Now they were awake, and the hour drew near when food was wont to be brought to us, and because of his dream each one was

apprehensive. And I heard the door below of the horrible tower locking up; whereat I looked on the faces of my sons without saying a word. I wept not, I was so turned to stone within. They wept; and my poor little Anselm said, ‘Thou lookest so, father, what aileth thee?’ Yet I did not weep; nor did I answer all that day, nor the night after, until the next sun came out upon the world. When a little ray entered the woeful prison, and I discerned by their four faces my own very aspect, both my hands I bit for woe; and they, thinking I did it through desire of eating, of a sudden rose, and said, ‘Father, it will be far less pain to us if thou eat of us; thou didst clothe us with this wretched flesh, and do thou strip it off.’ I quieted me then, not to make them more sad: that day and the next we all stayed dumb. Ah, thou hard earth! why didst thou not open? After we had come to the fourth day, Gaddo threw himself stretched out at my feet, saying, ‘My father, why dost thou not help me?’ Here he died: and, even as thou seest me, I saw the three fall one by one between the fifth day and the sixth; then I betook me, already blind, to groping over each, and two days I called them after they were dead: then fasting had more power than grief.”

When he had said this, with his eyes distorted, he seized again the wretched skull with his teeth, that were strong as a dog’s upon the bone.

Ah Pisa! reproach of the people of the fair country where the si doth sound,[1] since thy neighbors are slow to punish thee, let Caprara and Gorgona [2] move and make a hedge for Arno at its mouth, so that it drown every person in thee; for if Count Ugolino had repute of having betrayed thee in thy towns, thou oughtest not to have set his sons on such a cross. Their young age, thou modern Thebes! made Uguccione and the Brigata innocent, and the other two that the song names above.

[1] Italy, whose language Dante calls il volgare di ci. (Convito, i. 10.)

[2] Two little islands not far from the mouth of the Arno, on whose banks Pisa lies.

We passed onward to where the ice roughly enswathes another folk, not turned downward, but all upon their backs. Their very weeping lets them not weep, and the pain that finds a barrier on the eyes turns inward to increase the anguish; for the first tears form a block, and like a visor of crystal fill all the cup beneath the eyebrow.

And although, because of the cold, as from a callus, all feeling had left its abode in my face, it now seemed to me I felt some wind, wherefore I, “My Master, who moves this? Is not every vapor[1] quenched here below?” Whereon he to me, “Speedily shalt thou be where thine eye shall make answer to thee of this, beholding the cause that rains down the blast.”

[1] Wind being supposed to be cansed by the action of the sun on the vapors of the atmosphere.

And one of the wretches of the cold crust cried out to us, “O souls so cruel that the last station is given to you, lift from my eyes the hard veils, so that I may vent the grief that swells my heart, a little ere the weeping re-congeal!” Wherefore I to him, “If thou wilt that I relieve thee, tell me who thou art, and if I rid thee not, may it be mine to go to the bottom of the ice.” He replied then, “I am friar Alberigo;[1] I am he of the fruits of the bad garden, and here I receive a date for a fig.” [2] “Oh!” said I to him; “art thou now already dead?” And he to me, “How it may go with my body in the world above I bear no knowledge. Such vantage hath this Ptolomaea[3] that oftentime the soul falls hither ere Atropos hath given motion to it.[4] And that thou may the more willingly scrape the glassy tears from my face, know that soon as the soul betrays, as I did, its body is taken from it by a demon, who thereafter governs it until its time be all revolved. The soul falls headlong into this cistern, and perchance the body of the shade that here behind me winters still appears above; thou oughtest to know him if thou comest down but now. He is Ser Branca d’ Oria,[5] and many years have passed since he was thus shut up.” “I think,” said I to him, “that thou deceivest me, for Branca d’ Oria is not yet dead, and he eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and puts on clothes.” “In the ditch of the Malebranche above,” he said, “there where the tenacious pitch is boiling, Michel Zanche had not yet arrived when this one left in his own stead a devil in his body, and in that of one of his near kin, who committed the treachery together with him. But now stretch out hither thy hand; open my eyes for me.” And I opened them not for him, and to be rude to him was courtesy.

[1] Alberigo de’ Manfredi, of Faenza; one of the Jovial Friars (see Canto xxiii). Having received a blow from one of his kinsmen, he pretended to forgive it, and invited him and his son to a feast. Toward the end of the meal he gave a preconcerted signal by calling out, “Bring the fruit,” upon which his emissaries rushed in and killed the two guests. The “fruit of Brother Alberigo” became a proverb.

[2] A fig is the cheapest of Tuscan fruits; the imported date is more costly.

[3] The third ring of ice, named for that Ptolemy of Jericho who slew his father-in-law, the high-priest Simon, and his sons (1 Maccabees wi. 11-16).

[4] That is, before its life on earth is ended.

[5] Murderer, in 1275, of his father-in-law, Michel Zanche. Already heard of in the fifth pit (Canto xxii. 88).

Ah Genoese! men strange to all morality and full of all corruption, why are ye not scattered from the world? For with the worst spirit of Romagna I found one of you such that for his deeds in soul he is bathed in Cocytus, and in body he seems still alive on earth.

CANTO XXXIV.

Ninth Circle: traitors. Fourth ring: Judecca. — Lucifer. — Judas, Brutus and Cassius. — Centre of the universe. — Passage from Hell. — Ascent to the surface of the Southern Hemisphere.

"Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni,[1] toward us; therefore look in front," said my Master; "if thou discernest him." As a mill that the wind turns seems from afar when a thick fog breathes, or when our hemisphere grows dark with night, such a structure then it seemed to me I saw.

[1] "The banners of the King of Hell advance." Vexilla Regis prodeunt are the first words of a hymn in honor of the Cross, sung at vespers on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and on Monday of Holy Week.

Then, because of the wind, I drew me behind my Leader; for there was no other shelter. I was now, and with fear I put it in verse, there[1] where the shades were wholly covered, and showed through like a straw in glass. Some are lying; some stand erect, this on his head, and that on his soles; another like a bow inverts his face to his feet.

[1] In the fourth, innermost ring of ice of the ninth circle, the Judecca.

When we had gone so far forward that it pleased my Master to show me the creature that had the fair semblance, from before me he took himself and made me stop, saying, "Behold Dis, and behold the place where it is needful that with fortitude thou arm thee." How I became then chilled and hoarse, ask it not, Reader, for I write it not, because all speech would be little. I did not die, and I did not remain alive. Think now for thyself, if thou hast grain of wit, what I became, deprived of one and the other.

The emperor of the woeful realm from his midbreast issued forth from the ice; and I match better with a giant, than the giants do with his arms. See now how great must be that whole which corresponds to such parts. If he was as fair as he now is foul, and against his Maker lifted up his brow, surely may all tribulation proceed from him. Oh how great a marvel it seemed to me, when I saw three faces on his head! one in front, and that was red; the others were two that were joined to this above the very middle of each shoulder, and they were joined together at the place of the crest; and the right seemed between white and yellow, the left was such to sight as those who come from where the Nile flows valleyward. Beneath each came forth two great wings, of size befitting so huge a bird. Sails of the sea never saw I such. They had no feathers, but their fashion was of a bat; and he was flapping them so that three winds went forth from him, whereby Cocytus was all congealed. With six eyes he was weeping, and over

three chins trickled the tears and bloody drivel. With each mouth he was crushing a sinner with his teeth, in manner of a brake, so that he thus was making three of them woeful. To the one in front the biting was nothing to the clawing, so that sometimes his spine remained all stripped of skin.

"That soul up there which has the greatest punishment," said the Master, "is Judas Iscariot, who has his head within, and plies his legs outside. Of the other two who have their heads down, he who hangs from the black muzzle is Brutus; see how he writhes and says no word; and the other is Cassius, who seems so large-limbed. But the night is rising again, and now we must depart, for we have seen the whole."

As was his pleasure, I clasped his neck, and he took opportunity of time and place, and when the wings were opened wide he caught hold on the shaggy flanks; from shag to shag he then descended between the bushy hair and the frozen crusts. When we were just where the thigh turns on the thick of the haunch, my Leader, with effort and stress of breath, turned his head where he had his shanks, and clambered by the hair as a man that ascends, so that I thought to return again to hell.

"Cling fast hold," said the Master, panting like one weary, "for by such stairs it behoves to depart from so much evil." Then he came forth through the opening of a rock, and placed me upon its edge to sit; then stretched toward me his cautious step.

I raised my eyes, and thought to see Lucifer as I had left him, and I saw him holding his legs upward. And if I then became perplexed, let the dull folk think it that see not what that point is that I had passed.[1]

[1] This point is the centre of the universe; when Virgil had turned upon the haunch of Lucifer, the passage had been made from one hemisphere of the earth — the inhabited and known hemisphere — to the other where no living men dwell, and where the only land is the mountain of Purgatory. In changing one hemisphere for the other there is a change of time of twelve hours. A second Saturday morning begins for the poets, and they pass nearly as long a time as they have been in Hell, that is, twenty-four hours, in traversing the long and hard way that leads through the new hemisphere on which they have just entered.

"Rise up," said the Master, "on thy feet; the way is long and the road is difficult, and already the sun unto mid-tierce[1] returns."

[2] Tierce is the church office sung at the third hour of the day, and the name is given to the first three hours after sunrise. Midtierce consequently here means about half-past seven o'clock. In Hell Dante never mentions the sun to mark division of time, but now, having issued from Hell, Virgil marks the hour by a reference to the sun.

It was no hallway of a palace where we were, but a natural dungeon that had a bad floor, and lack of light. "Before I tear me from the abyss," said I when I had risen up, "my Master, speak a little to me to draw me out of error. Where is the ice? and this one, how is he fixed thus upside down? and how in such short while has the sun from eve to morn made transit?" And he to me, "Thou imaginest that thou still art on the other side of the centre where I laid hold on

the hair of the guilty Worm that pierces the world. On that side wast thou so long as I descended; when I turned thou didst pass the point to which from all parts whatever has weight is drawn; and thou art now arrived beneath the hemisphere opposite to that which the great dry land covers, and beneath whose zenith the Man was slain who was born and lived without sin. Thou hast thy feet upon the little sphere which forms the other face of the Judecca. Here it is morning when there it is evening; and he who made for us a stairway with his hair is still fixed even as he was before. Upon this side he fell down from heaven, and the earth, which before was spread out here, through fear of him made of the sea a veil, and came to your hemisphere; and perchance to flee from him that land[1] which on this side appears left here this empty space and upward ran back."

[1] The Mount of Purgatory.

A place is there below, stretching as far from Beelzebub as his tomb extends,[1] which not by sight is known, but by the sound of a rivulet that here descends along the hollow of a rock that it has gnawed with its course that winds and little falls. My Leader and I entered through that hidden way, to return to the bright world. And without care, to have any repose, we mounted up, he first and I second, till through a round opening I saw of those beauteous things which heaven bears, and thence we came forth to see again the stars.

[1] Hell is his tomb; this vacant dark passage through the opposite hemisphere is, of course, of the same depth as Hell from surface to centre.

PURGATORY

CANTO I.

Invocation to the Muses. — Dawn of Easter on the shore of Purgatory. — The Four Stars. — Cato. — The cleansing of Dante from the stains of Hell.

To run over better waters the little vessel of my genius now hoists its sails, and leaves behind itself a sea so cruel; and I will sing of that second realm where the human spirit is purified and becomes worthy to ascend to heaven.

But here let dead poesy rise again, O holy Muses, since yours I am, and here let Calliope somewhat mount up, accompanying my song with that sound of which the wretched Picae felt the stroke such that they despaired of pardon.[1]

[1] The nine daughters of Pieros, king of Emathia, who, contending in song with the Muses, were for their presumption changed to magpies.

A sweet color of oriental sapphire, which was gathering in the serene aspect of the sky, pure even to the first circle,[1] renewed delight to my eyes soon as I issued forth from the dead air that had afflicted my eyes and my breast. The fair planet which incites to love was making all the Orient to smile, veiling the Fishes that were in her train.[2] I turned me to the right hand, and fixed my mind upon the other pole, and saw four stars never seen save by the first people.[3] The heavens appeared to rejoice in their flamelets. O widowed northern region, since thou art deprived of beholding these!

[1] By "the first circle," Dante seems to mean the horizon.

[2] At the spring equinox Venus is in the sign of the Pisces, which immediately precedes that of Aries, in which is the Sun. The time indicated is therefore an hour or more before sunrise on Easter morning, April 10.

When I had withdrawn from regarding them, turning me a little to the other pole, there whence the Wain had already disappeared, I saw close to me an old man alone, worthy in look of so much reverence that no son owes more unto his father.[1] He wore a long beard and mingled with white hair, like his locks, of which a double list fell upon his breast. The rays of the four holy stars so adorned his face with light, that I saw him, as if the sun had been in front.

[1] These stars are the symbols of the four Cardinal Virtues, — Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice, — the virtues of active life, sufficient to guide men in the right path, but not to bring them to Paradise. By the first people arc probably meant Adam and Eve, who from the terrestrial Paradise, on the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, had seen these stars, visible only from the Southern hemisphere. According to the geography of the time Asia and Africa lay north of the equator, so that even to their inhabitants these stars were invisible. Possibly the meaning is that these stars, symbolizing the cardinal virtues, had been visible only in the golden age.

This old man, as soon appears, is the younger Cato, and the office here given to him of warden of the souls in the outer region of Purgatory was suggested by the position assigned to him by Virgil in the Aeneid, viii. 670. "Secretosque pios, his dantem jura Catonem."

It has been objected to Virgil's thus putting him in Elysium, that as a suicide his place was in the Mourning Fields. A similar objection may be made to Dante's separating him from the other suicides in the seventh circle of Hell (Canto XIII.). "But," says Conington, "Virgil did not aim at perfect consistency. It was enough for him that Cato was one who from his character in life might be justly conceived of as lawgiver to the dead." So Dante, using Cato as an allegoric figure, regards him as one who, before the coming of Christ, practised the virtues which are required to liberate the soul from sin, and who, as be says in the De Monarchia (ii. 5), "that he might kindle the love of liberty in the world, showed how precious it was, by preferring death with liberty to life without it." This liberty is the type of that spiritual freedom which Dante is seeking, and which, being the perfect conformity of the human will to the will of God, is the aim and fruition of nil redeemed souls.

In the region of Purgatory outside the gate, the souls have not yet attained this freedom; they are on the way to it, and Cato is allegorically fit to warn and spur them on.

"Who are ye that counter to the blind stream have fled from the eternal prison?" said he, moving those venerable plumes. "Who has guided you? Or who was a lamp to you, issuing forth from the deep night that ever makes the infernal valley black? Are the laws of the abyss thus broken? or is a new design changed in heaven that, being damned, ye come unto my rocks?"

My Leader then took hold of me, and with words, and with hands, and with signs, made my legs and my brow reverent. Then he answered him, "Of myself I came not; a Lady descended from Heaven, through whose prayers I succored this man with my company. But since it is thy will that more of our condition be unfolded to thee as it truly is, mine cannot be that to thee this be denied. This man has not seen his last evening, but through his folly was so near thereto that very little time there was to turn. Even as I have said, I was sent to him to rescue him, and there was no other way than this, along which I have set myself. I have shown to him all the guilty people; and now I intend to show him those spirits that purge themselves under thy ward. How I have led him, it would be long to tell thee; from on high descends power that aids me to conduct him to see thee and to hear thee. Now may it please thee to approve his coming. He goes seeking liberty, which is so dear, as he knows who for her refuses life. Thou knowest it, for death for her sake was not hitter to thee in Utica, where thou didst leave the garment that on the great day shall he so bright. The eternal edicts are not violated by us, for this one is alive, and Minos does not bind me; but I am of the circle where are the chaste eyes of thy Marcia, who in her look still prays thee, O holy breast, that for thine own thou hold her. For her love, then, incline thyself to

us; let us go on through thy seven realms.[1] Thanks unto thee will I carry back to her, if to be mentioned there below thou deign."

[1] The seven circles of Purgatory.

"Marcia so pleased my eyes while I was on earth," said he then, "that whatsoever grace she wished from me I did it; now, that on the other side of the evil stream she dwells, she can no more move me, by that law which was made when thence I issued forth.[1] But if a Lady of heaven move and direct thee, as thou sayest, there is no need of flattery; suffice it fully to thee that for her sake thou askest me. Go then, and see thou gird this one with a smooth rush, and that thou wash his face so that thou remove all sully from it, for it were not befitting to go with eye overcast by any cloud before the first minister that is of those of Paradise. This little island, round about at its base, down there yonder where the wave heats it, bears rushes upon its soft ooze. No plant of other kind, that might put forth leaf or grow hard, can there have life, because it yields not to the shocks. Thereafter let not your return be this way; the Sun which now is rising will show you to take the mountain by easier ascent."

[1] The law that the redeemed cannot be touched by other than heavenly affections.

So he disappeared, and I rose up, without speaking, and drew me close to my Leader, and turned my eyes to him. He began, "Son, follow my steps; let us turn back, for this plain slopes that way to its low limits."

The dawn was vanquishing the matin hour which fled before it, so that from afar I discerned the trembling of the sea. We set forth over the solitary plain like a man who turns unto the road which he has lost, and, till he come to it, seems to himself to go in vain. When we were where the dew contends with the sun, and, through being in a place where there is shade, is little dissipated, my Master softly placed both his hands outspread upon the grass. Whereon I, who perceived his design, stretched toward him my tear-stained cheeks. Here he wholly uncovered that color of mine which hell had hidden on me.[1]

[1] Allegorically, when the soul has entered upon the way of purification Reason, with the dew of repentance, washes off the stain of sin, and girds the spirit with humility.

We came, then, to the desert shore that never saw navigate its waters one who afterwards had experience of return. Here he girt me, even as pleased the other. O marvel! that such as he plucked the humble plant, it instantly sprang up again there whence he tore it.[1]

[1] The goods of the spirit are not diminished by appropriation.

CANTO II.

Sunrise. — The Poets on the shore. — Coming of a boat, guided by an angel, bearing souls to Purgatory. — Their landing. — Casella and his song. — Cato hurries the souls to the mountain.

Now had the sun reached the horizon whose meridian circle covers Jerusalem with its highest point; and the night which circles opposite to it was issuing forth from Ganges with the Scales that fall from her hand when she exceeds;[1] so that where I was the white and red cheeks of the beautiful Aurora by too much age were becoming orange.

[1] Purgatory and Jerusalem are antipodal, and in one direction the Ganges or India was arbitrarily assumed to be their common horizon. The night is here taken as the point of the Heavens opposite the sun, and the sun being in Aries, the night is in Libra. When night exceeds, that is, at the autumnal equinox, when the night becomes longer than the day, the Scales may be said to drop from her hand, since the sun enters Libra.

We were still alongside the sea, like folk who are thinking of their road, who go in heart and linger in body; and lo! as, at approach of the morning, through the dense vapors Mars glows ruddy, down in the west above the ocean floor, such appeared to me, — so may I again behold it! — a light along the sea coming so swiftly that no flight equals its motion. From which when I had a little withdrawn my eye to ask my Leader, again I saw it, brighter become and larger. Then on each side of it appeared to me a something, I know not what, white, and beneath, little by little, another came forth from it. My Master still said not a word, until the first white things showed themselves wings; then, When he clearly recognized the pilot, he cried out, “Mind, mind, thou bend thy knees. Lo! the Angel of God: fold thy hands; henceforth shalt thou see such officials. See how he scorns human means, so that he wills not oar, or other sail than his own wings between such distant shores. See, how he holds them straight toward heaven, stroking the air with his eternal feathers that are not changed like mortal hair.”

Then, as nearer and nearer toward us came the Bird Divine, the brighter he appeared; so that near by my eye endured him not, but I bent it down: and he came on to the shore with a small vessel, very swift and light so that the water swallowed naught of it. At the stern stood the Celestial Pilot, such that if but described he would make blessed; and more than a hundred spirits sat within. “In exitu Israel de Egypto”[1] they all were singing together with one voice, with whatso of that psalm is after written. Then he made the sign of holy cross upon them; whereon they all threw themselves upon the strand; and he went away swift as he had come.

1 “When Israel went out of Egypt.” Psalm cxiv.

The crowd which remained there seemed strange to the place, gazing round about like him who of new things makes essay. On all sides the Sun, who had with his bright arrows chased from midheaven the Capricorn,[1] was shooting forth the day, when the new people raised their brow toward us, saying to us, “If ye know, show us the way to go unto the mountain.” And Virgil answered, “Ye believe, perchance, that we are acquainted with this place, but we are pilgrims even as ye are. Just now we came, a little before you, by another way, which was so rough and difficult that the ascent henceforth will seem play to us.

[1] When Aries, in which the Sun was rising, is on the horizon, Capricorn is at the zenith.

The souls who had become aware concerning me by my breathing, that I was still alive, marvelling became deadly pale. And as to a messenger who bears an olive branch the folk press to hear news, and no one shows himself shy of crowding, so, at the sight of me, those fortunate souls stopped still, all of them, as if forgetting to go to make themselves fair.

I saw one of them drawing forward to embrace me with so great affection that it moved me to do the like. O shades empty save in aspect! Three times behind it I clasped my hands and as oft returned with them unto my breast. With marvel, I believe, I painted me; wherefore the shade smiled and drew back, and I, following it, pressed forward, Gently it said, that I should pause; then I knew who it was, and I prayed it that to speak with me it would stop a little. It replied to me, “So as I loved thee in the mortal body, so loosed from it I love thee; therefore I stop; but wherefore goest thou?”

“Casella mine, in order to return another time to this place where I am, do I make this journey,” said I, “but from thee how has so much time been taken?”[1]

[1] “How has thy coming hither been delayed so long since thy death?”

And he to me, “No wrong has been done me if he[1] who takes both when and whom it pleases him ofttimes hath denied to me this passage; for of a just will[2] his own is made. Truly for three months he has taken with all peace whoso has wished to enter. Wherefore I who was now turned to the seashore where the water of Tiber grows salt was benignantly received by him.[3] To that outlet has he now turned his wing, because always those assemble there who towards Acheron do not descend.”

[1] The Celestial Pilot.

[2] That is, of the Divine Will; but there is no explanation of the motive of the delay.

[3] The Tiber is the local symbol of the Church of Rome, from whose bosom those who die at peace with her pass to Purgatory. The Jubilee, proclaimed by Boniface VIII., had begun at Christmas, 1299, so that for three months now the Celestial Pilot had received graciously all who had taken advantage of it to gain remission of their sins.

And I, “If a new law take not from thee memory or practice of the song of love which was wont to quiet in me all my longings, may it please thee therewith somewhat to comfort my soul, which coming hither with its body is so wearied.”

“Love which in my mind discourseth with me,”[1] began he then so sweetly that the sweetness still within me sounds.[2] My Master, and I, and that folk who were with him, appeared so content as if naught else could touch the mind of any.

[1] The first verse of a canzone by Dante; the canzone is the second of those upon which he comments in his Convito.

[2] Every English reader recalls Milton’s Sonnet to Mr. Henry Lawes: —

“Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he woo’d to sing,
Met in the milder shades of purgatory.”

Nothing is known of Casella beyond what is implied in Dante’s affectionate record of their meeting.

We were all fixed and attentive to his notes; and lo! the venerable old man crying, “What is this, ye laggard spirits? What negligence, what stay is this? Run to the mountain to strip off the slough that lets not God be manifest to you.”

As, when gathering grain or tare, the doves assembled at their feeding, quiet, without display of their accustomed pride, if aught appear of which they are afraid, suddenly let the food alone, because they are assailed by a greater care, so I saw that fresh troop leave the song, and go towards the hill-side, like one that goes but knows not where he may come out. Nor was our departure less speedy.

CANTO III.

Ante-Purgatory. — Souls of those who have died in contumacy of the Church. — Manfred.

Inasmuch as the sudden flight had scattered them over the plain, turned to the mount whereto reason spurs us, I drew me close to my trusty companion. And how should I without him have run? Who would have drawn me up over the mountain? He seemed to me of his own self remorseful. O conscience, upright and stainless, how bitter a sting to thee is little fault!

When his feet left the haste that takes the seemliness from every act, my mind, which at first had been restrained, let loose its attention, as though eager, and I turned my face unto the hill that towards the heaven rises highest from the sea. The sun, which behind was flaming ruddy, was broken in front of me by the figure that the staying of its rays upon me formed. When I saw the ground darkened only in front of me, I turned me to my side with fear of being abandoned: and my Comfort, wholly turning to me, began to say, “Why dost thou still distrust? Dost thou not believe me with thee, and that I guide thee? It is now evening there where the body is buried within which I cast a shadow; Naples holds it, and from Brundusium it is taken; if now in front of me there is no shadow, marvel not more than at the heavens of which one hinders not the other’s radiance. To suffer torments, both hot and cold, bodies like this the Power ordains, which wills not that how it acts be revealed to us. Mad is he who hopes that our reason can traverse the infinite way which One Substance in Three Persons holds. Be content, human race, with the quia;[1]; for if ye had been able to see everything, need had not been for Mary to hear child: and ye have seen desiring fruitlessly men such [2] that their desire would have been quieted, which is given them eternally for a grief. I speak of Aristotle and of Plato, and of many others;” and here he bowed his front, and said no more, and remained disturbed.

[1] Quic is used here, as often in mediaeval Latin, for quod. The meaning is, Be content to know that the thing is, seek not to know WHY or HOW — propter quid — it is as it is.

[2] If human knowledge sufficed.

We had come, meanwhile, to the foot of the mountain; here we found the rock so steep, that there the legs would be agile in vain. Between Lerici and Turbia[1] the most deserted, the most secluded way is a stair easy and open, compared with that. “Now who knows on which hand the hillside slopes,” said my Master, staying his step, “so that he can ascend who goeth without wings?”

[1] Lerici on the Gulf of Spezzia, and Turbia, just above Monaco, are at the two ends of the Riviera; between them the mountains rise steeply from the shore, along which in Dante's time there was no road.

And while he was holding his face low, questioning his mind about the road, and I was looking up around the rock, on the left hand appeared to me a company of souls who were moving their feet towards us, and seemed not, so slowly were they coming. "Lift," said I to the Master, "thine eyes, lo! on this side who will give us counsel, if thou from thyself canst not have it." He looked at them, and with air of relief, answered, "Let us go thither, for they come slowly, and do thou confirm thy hope, sweet son.

That people was still as far, I mean after a thousand steps of ours, as a good thrower would cast with his hand, when they all pressed up to the hard masses of the high bank, and stood still and close, as one who goes in doubt stops to look.[1] "O ye who have made good ends, O spirits already elect," Virgil began, "by that peace which I believe is awaited by you all, tell us, where the mountain lies so that the going up is possible; for to lose time is most displeasing to him who knows most."

[1] They stopped, surprised, at seeing Virgil and Dante advancing to the left, against the rule in Purgatory, where the course is always to the right, symbolizing progress in good. In Hell the contrary rule holds.

As the sheep come forth from the fold by ones, and twos, and threes, and the others stand timid, holding eye and muzzle to the ground; and what the first does the others also do, huddling themselves to her if she stop, silly and quiet, and wherefore know not; so I saw then moving to approach, the head of that fortunate flock, modest in face and dignified in gait.

When those in front saw the light broken on the ground at my right side, so that the shadow fell from me on the cliff, they stopped, and drew somewhat back; and all the rest who were coming behind, not knowing why, did just the same. "Without your asking, I confess to you that this is a human body which you see, whereby the light of the sun on the ground is cleft. Marvel not thereat, but believe that not without power that comes from heaven he seeks to surmount this wall." Thus the Master:and that worthy people said, "Turn, enter in advance, then;" with the backs of their hands making sign. And one of them began, "Whoever thou art, turn thy face as thou thus goest; consider if in the world thou didst ever see me?" I turned me toward him, and looked at him fixedly: blond he was, and beautiful, and of gentle aspect, but a blow had divided one of his eyebrows.

When I had humbly disclaimed having ever seen him, he said, "Now look!" and he showed me a wound at the top of his breast. Then he said, smiling, "I am Manfred,[1] grandson of the Empress Constance; wherefore I pray thee, that when thou returnest, thou go to my beautiful daughter,[2] mother of the honor of Sicily

and of Aragon, and tell to her the truth if aught else be told. After I had my body broken by two mortal stabs, I rendered myself, weeping, to Him who pardons willingly. Horrible were my sins, but the Infinite Goodness has such wide arms that it takes whatever turns to it. If the Pastor of Cosenza,[3] who was set on the hunt of me by Clement, had then rightly read this page in God, the bones of my body would still be at the head of the bridge near Benevento, under the guard of the heavy cairn. Now the rain bathes them, and the wind moves them forth from the kingdom, almost along the Verde, whither he transferred them with extinguished light.[4] By their [5] malediction the Eternal Love is not so lost that it cannot return, while hope hath speck of green. True is it, that whoso dies in contumacy of Holy Church, though he repent him at the end, needs must stay outside[6] upon this bank thirtyfold the whole time that he has been in his presumption,[7] if such decree become not shorter through good prayers. See now if thou canst make me glad, revealing to my good Constance how thou hast seen me, and also this prohibition,[8] for here through those on earth much is gained."

[1] The natural son of the Emperor Frederick II. He was born in 1231; in 1258 he was crowned King of Sicily. In 1263 Charles of Anjou was called by Pope Urban IV. to contend against him, and in 1266 Manfred was killed at the battle of Benevento.

[2] Constance, the daughter of Manfred, was married to Peter of Aragon. She had three sons, Alphonso, James, and Frederick. Alphonso succeeded his father in Aragon, and James in Sicily, but after the death of Alphonso James became King of Aragon. and Frederick King of Sicily. Manfred naturally speaks favorably of them, but Dante himself thought ill of James and Frederick. See Canto VII., towards the end.

[3] The Archbishop of Cosenza, at command of the Pope, Clement IV., took the body of Manfred from his grave near Benevento, and threw it unburied, as the body of one excommunicated, on the bank of the Verde.

[4] Not with candles burning as in proper funeral rites.

[5] That is, of Pope or Bishop.

[6] Outside the gate of Purgatory.

[7] This seems to be a doctrine peculiar to Dante. The value of the prayers of the good on earth in shortening the period of suffering of the souls in Purgatory is more than once referred to by him, as well as the virtue of the intercession of the souls in Purgatory for the benefit of the living. [8] The prohibition of entering within Purgatory.

CANTO IV.

Ante-Purgatory. — Ascent to a shelf of the mountain. — The negligent, who postponed repentance to the last hour. — Belacqua.

When through delights, or through pains which some power of ours may experience, the soul is all concentrated thereon, it seems that to no other faculty it may attend; and this is counter to the error which believes that one soul above another is kindled in us.[1] And therefore, when a thing is heard or seen, which may hold the soul intently turned to it, the time passes, and the man observes it not: for one faculty is that which listens, and another is that which keeps the soul entire; the latter is as it were bound, and the former is loosed.

[1] Were it true that, as according to the Platonists, there were more than one soul in man, he might give attention to two things at once. But when one faculty is free and called into activity, the rest of the soul is as it were bound in inaction.

Of this had I true experience, hearing that spirit and wondering; for full fifty degrees had the sun ascended,[1] and I had not noticed it, when we came where those souls all together cried out to us, “Here is what you ask.”

[1] It was now about nine o’clock A. M.

A larger opening the man of the farm often hedges up with a forkful of his thorns, when the grape grows dark, than was the passage through which my Leader and I behind ascended alone, when the troop departed from us. One goes to Sanleo, and descends to Noli, one mounts up Bismantova[1] to its peak, with only the feet; but here it behoves that one fly, I mean with the swift wings and with the feathers of great desire, behind that guide who gave me hope and made a light for me. We ascended in through the broken rock, and on each side the border pressed on us, and the ground beneath required both feet and hands.

[1] These all are places difficult of access.

When we were upon the upper edge of the high bank on the open slope, “My Master,” said I, “what way shall we take?” And he to me, “Let no step of thine fall back, always win up the mountain behind me, till some sage guide appear for us.”

The summit was so high it surpassed the sight and the side steeper far than a line from the mid quadrant to the centre.[1] I was weary, when I began, “O sweet Father, turn and regard howl remain alone if thou dost not stop.” “My son,” said he, “far as here drag thyself,” pointing me to a ledge a little above, which on that side circles all the hill. His words so spurred me, that I forced myself, scrambling after him, until the belt was beneath my feet. There we both sat

down, turning to the east, whence we had ascended, for to look back is wont to encourage one. I first turned my eyes to the low shores, then I raised them to the sun, and wondered that on the left we were struck by it. The Poet perceived clearly that I was standing all bewildered at the chariot of the light, where between us and Aquilo,[2] it was entering. Whereupon he to me, “If Castor and Pollux were in company with that mirror [3] which up and down guides with its light, thou wouldst see the ruddy Zodiac revolving still closer to the Bears, if it went not out of its old road.[4] How that may be, if thou wishest to be able to think, collected in thyself imagine Zion and this mountain to stand upon the earth so that both have one sole horizon, and different hemispheres; then thou wilt see that the road which Phaethon, to his harm, knew not how to drive, must needs pass on the one side of this mountain, and on the other side of that, if thy intelligence right clearly heeds.” “Surely, my Master,” said I, “never yet saw I so clearly, as I now discern there where my wit seemed deficient; for the mid-circle of the supernal motion, which is called Equator in a certain art,[4] and which always remains between the sun and the winter, for the reason that thou tellest, from here departs toward the north, while the Hebrews saw it toward the warm region. But, if it please thee, willingly I would know how far we have to go, for the hill rises higher than my eyes can rise.” And he to me, “This mountain is such, that ever at the beginning below it is hard, and the higher one goes the less it hurts; therefore when it shall seem so pleasant to thee that the going up will be easy to thee as going down the current in a vessel, then wilt thou be at the end of this path; there repose from toil await: no more I answer, and this I know for true.”

[1] A steeper inclination than that of an angle of forty-five degrees.

[2] The North.

[3] The brightness of the sun is the reflection of the Divine light.

[4] If the sun were in the sign of the Gemini instead of being in Aries it would make the Zodiac ruddy still farther to the north. In Purgatory the sun being seen from south of the equator is on the left hand, while at Jerusalem, in the northern hemisphere, it is seen on the right.

[5] Astronomy.

And when he had said his word, a voice near by sounded, “Perchance thou wilt be first constrained to sit.” At the sound of it each of us turned, and we saw at the left a great stone which neither he nor I before had noticed. Thither we drew; and there were persons who were staying in the shadow behind the rock, as one through indolence sets himself to stay. And one of them, who seemed to me weary, was seated, and was clasping his knees, holding his face down low between them. “O sweet my Lord,” said I, “look at him who shows himself more

indolent than if sloth were his sister.” Then that one turned to us and gave heed, moving his look only up along his thigh, and said, “Now go up thou, for thou art valiant.” I recognized then who he was, and that effort which was still quickening my breath a little hindered not my going to him, and after I had reached him, he scarce raised his head, saying, “Hast thou clearly seen how the sun over thy left shoulder drives his chariot?”

His slothful acts and his short words moved my lips a little to a smile, then I began, “Belacqua,[1] I do not grieve for thee now,[2] but tell me why just here thou art seated? awaitest thou a guide, or has only thy wonted mood recaptured thee?” And he, “Brother, what imports the going up? For the bird of God that sitteth at the gate would not let me go to the torments. It first behoves that heaven circle around me outside the gate, as long as it did in life, because I delayed good sighs until the end; unless the prayer first aid me which rises up from a heart that lives in grace: what avails the other which is not heard in heaven?”

[1] Belacqua, according to Benvenuto da Imola, was a Florentine, a maker of citherns and other musical instruments; he carved with great care the necks and heads of his citherns, and sometimes he played on them. Dante, because of his love of music, had been well acquainted with him.

[2] He had feared lest Belacqua might be in Hell.

And now the Poet in front of me was ascending, and he said, “Come on now: thou seest that the meridian is touched by the sun, and on the shore the night now covers with her foot Morocco.”

CANTO V.

Ante-Purgatory. — Spirits who had delayed repentance, and met with death by violence, but died repentant. — Jacopo del Cassero. — Buonconte da Montefeltro — Via de' Tolomei.

I had now parted from those shades, and was following the footsteps of my Leader, when behind me, pointing his finger, one cried out, "Look, the ray seems not to shine on the left hand of that lower one, and as if alive he seems to hear himself." I turned my eyes at the sound of these words, and I saw them watching, for marvel, only me, only me, and the light which was broken.

"Why is thy mind so hampered," said the Master, "that thou slackenest thy going? What matters to thee that which here is whispered? Come after me, and let the people talk. Stand as a tower firm, that never wags its top for blowing of the winds; for always the man in whom thought on thought wells up removes from himself his aim, for the force of one weakens the other." What could I answer, save "I come"? I said it, overspread somewhat with the color, which, at times, makes a man worthy of pardon.

And meanwhile across upon the mountain side, a little in front of us, were coming people, singing "Miserere," verse by verse. When they observed that I gave not place for passage of the rays through my body, they changed their song into a long and hoarse "Oh!" and two of them, in form of messengers, ran to meet us, and asked of us, "Of your condition make us cognizant." And my Master, "Ye can go back, and report to them who sent you, that the body of this one is true flesh. If, as I suppose, they stopped because of seeing his shadow, enough is answered them; let them do him honor and he may he dear to them."

Never did I see enkindled vapors at early night so swiftly cleave the clear sky, nor at set of sun the clouds of August, that these did not return up in less time; and, arrived there, they, with the others, gave a turn toward us, like a troop that runs without curb. "These folk that press to us are many, and they come to pray thee," said the Poet; "wherefore still go on, and in going listen." "O soul," they came crying, "that goest to be happy with those limbs with which thou wast born, a little stay thy step; look if thou hast ever seen any one of us, so that thou mayest carry news of him to earth. Ah, why dost thou go on? Ah, why dost thou not stop? We were of old all done to death by violence, and sinners up to the last hour; then light from Heaven made us mindful, so that both penitent and pardoning we issued forth from life, at peace with God, who fills our hearts with the desire to see him." And I, "Although I gaze upon your faces, not one I recognize; but if aught that I can do be pleasing to you, spirits wellborn,[1] speak

ye, and I will do it by that peace which makes me, following the feet of such a guide, seek for itself from world to world." And one began, "Each of us trusts in thy good turn without thy swearing it, provided want of power cut not off the will; wherefore I, who alone before the others speak, pray thee, if ever thou see that land that sits between Romagna and the land of Charles,[2] that thou be courteous to me with thy prayers in Fano, so that for me good orisons be made, whereby I may purge away my grave offences. Thence was I; but the deep wounds, wherefrom issued the blood in which I had my seat,[3] were given me in the bosom of the Endoneuria,[4] there where I thought to be most secure; he of Este had it done, who held me in wrath far beyond what justice willed. But if I had fled toward Mira,[5] when I was overtaken at Oriaco, I should still be yonder where men breathe. I ran to the marsh, and the reeds and the mire hampered me so that I fell, and there I saw a lake made by my veins upon the ground."

[1] Elect from birth to the joys of Paradise, in contrast with the ill-born, the miscreants of Hell.

[2] The March of Ancona, between the Romagna and the kingdom of Naples, then held by Charles II. of Anjou. It is Jacopo del Cassero who speaks. He was a noted and valiant member of the leading Guelph family in Fano. On his way to take the place of Podesta of Milan, in 1298, he was assassinated by the minions of Azzo VIII. of Este, whom he had offended.

[3] The life of all flesh is the blood thereof." Levit., xvii. 14. Or, according to the Vulgate, "Anima carnis in sanguine est."

[4] That is to say, in the territory of the Paduans, whose city was reputed to have been founded by Antenor.

[5] Mira is a little settlement on the bank of one of the canals of the Brenta. Why flight thither would have been safe is mere matter of conjecture.

Then said another, "Ah! so may that desire be fulfilled which draws thee to the high mountain, with good piety help thou mine. I was of Montefeltro, and am Buonconte.[1] Joan or any other has no care for me, wherefore I go among these with downcast front." And I to him, "What violence, or what chance so carried thee astray from Campaldino,[2] that thy burial place was never known?" "Oh!" replied he, "at foot of the Casentino crosses a stream, named the Archiano, which rises in the Apennine above the Hermitage.[3] Where its proper name becomes vain[4] I arrived, pierced in the throat, flying on foot, and bloodying the plain. Here I lost my sight, and I ended my speech with the name of Mary, and here I fell, and my flesh remained alone. I will tell the truth, and do thou repeat it among the living. The Angel of God took me, and he of Hell cried out, "O thou from Heaven, why dost thou rob me?[5] Thou bearest away for thyself the eternal part of him for one little tear which takes him from me; but of the rest I will make other disposal." Thou knowest well how in the air is condensed that moist vapor which turns to water soon as it rises where the cold seizes it. He joined that evil will, which seeketh only evil, with intelligence, and moved the mist and the wind by the power that his own nature gave. Then when the day was spent he

covered the valley with cloud, from Pratomagno to the great chain, and made the frost above so intense that the pregnant air was turned to water. The rain fell, and to the gullies came of it what the earth did not endure, and as it gathered in great streams it rushed so swiftly towards the royal river that nothing held it back. The robust Archiano found my frozen body near its outlet, and pushed it into the Arno, and loosed on my breast the cross which I made of myself when the pain overcame me. It rolled me along its banks, and along its bottom, then with its spoil it covered and girt me."

[1] Son of Count Guido da Montefeltro, the treacherous counsellor who had told his story to Dante in Hell, Canto XXVII. Joan was his wife.

[2] The battle of Campaldino, in which Dante himself, perhaps, took part, was fought on the 11th of June, 1289, between the Florentine Guelphs and the Ghibellines of Arezzo. Buonconte was the captain of the Aretines. Campaldino is a little plain in the upper valley of the Arno.

[3] The convent of the Calmaldoli, founded by St. Romualdo of Ravenna, in 1012.

[4] Being lost at its junction with the Arno.

[5] St. Francis and one of the black Cherubim had had a similar contention, as will be remembered, over the soul of Buonconte's father.

"Ah! when thou shalt have returned unto the world, and rested from the long journey," the third spirit followed on the second, "be mindful of me, who am Pia.[1] Siena made me, Maremma unmade me; he knows it who with his gem ringed me, betrothed before."

[1] This sad Pia is supposed to have belonged to the Sienese family of the Tolomei, and to have been the wife of Nello or Paganello de' Pannocchieschi, who was reported to have had her put to death in his stronghold of Pietra in the Tuscan Maremma. Her fate seems the more pitiable that she does not pray Dante to seek for her the prayers of any living person. The last words of Pia are obscure, and are interpreted variously. Possibly the "betrothed before" hints at a source of jealousy as the motive of her murder.

CANTO VI.

Ante-Purgatory. — More spirits who had deferred repentance till they were overtaken by a violent death. — Efficacy of prayer. — Sordello. — Apostrophe to Italy.

When a game of dice is broken up, he who loses remains sorrowful, repeating the throws, and, saddened, learns; with the other all the folk go along; one goes before and one plucks him from behind, and at his side one brings himself to mind. He does not stop; listens to one and the other the man to whom he reaches forth his hand presses on him no longer, and thus from the throng he defends himself. Such was I in that dense crowd, turning my face to them this way and that; and, promising, I loosed myself from them.

Here was the Aretine,[1] who from the fierce arms of Ghin di Tacco had his death; and the other who was drowned when running in pursuit. Here Federigo Novello [2] was praying with hands outstretched, and he of Pisa, who made the good Marzucco seem strong.[3] I saw Count Orso; and the soul divided from its body by spite and by envy, as it said, and not for fault committed, Pierre do la Brosse,[5] I mean; and here let the Lady of Brabant take forethought, while she is on earth, so that for this she be not of the worse flock.

[1] The Aretine was Messer Benincasa da Laterina, a learned judge, who had condemned to death for their crimes two relatives of Ghin di Tacco, the most famous freebooter of the day, whose headquarters were between Siena and Rome. Some time after, Messer Benincasa sitting as judge in Rome, Ghino entered the city with a band of his followers, made his way to the tribunal, slew Benincasa, and escaped unharmed.

[2] Another Aretine, of the Tarlati family, concerning whose death the early commentators are at variance. Benvenuto da Imola says that, hotly pursuing his enemies, his horse carried him into a marsh, from which he could not extricate himself, so that his foes turned upon him and slew him with their arrows.

[3] Federigo, son of the Count Guido Novello, of the circumstances of whose death, said to have taken place in 1291, nothing certain is known. Benvenuto says, he was multum probus, a good youth, and therefore Dante mentions him.

[4] Of him of Pisa different stories are told. Benvenuto says, “I have heard from the good Boccaccio, whom I trust more than the others, that Marzucco was a good man of the city of Pisa, whose son was beheaded by order of Count Ugolino, the tyrant, who commanded that his body should remain unburied. In the evening his father went to the Count, as a stranger unconcerned in the matter, and, without tears or other sign of grief, said, ‘Surely, my lord, it would be to your honor that that poor body should be buried, and not left cruelly as food for dogs.’ Then the Count, recognizing him, said astonished, ‘Go, your patience overcomes my obduracy,’ and immediately Marzucco went and buried his son.”

[5] Of Count Orso nothing is known with certainty.

[6] Pierre de is Brosse was chamberlain and confidant of Philip the Bold of France. He lost the king’s favor, and charges of wrong-doing being brought against him he was hung. It was reported that his death was brought about through jealousy by Mary of Brabant, the second wife of Philip. She lived till 1321, so that Dante’s warning may have reached her ears.

When I was free from each and all those shades who prayed only that some one else should pray, so that their becoming holy may be speeded, I began, “It seems that thou deniest to me, O Light of mine, expressly, in a certain text, that

orison can bend decree of Heaven, and this folk pray only for this, — shall then their hope be vain? or is thy saying not rightly clear to me?[1]

[1] Virgil represents Palinurus as begging to be allowed to cross the Styx, while his body was still unburied and without due funeral rites. To this petition the Sibyl answers: — Desine fata Deum flecti sperare precando: — Cease to hope that the decrees of the gods can be changed by prayer." — Aeneid, vi. 376.

And he to me, "My writing is plain, and the hope of these is not fallacious, if well it is regarded with sound mind; for top of judgment vails not itself because a fire of love may, in one instant, fulfil that which he who is stationed here must satisfy. And there where I affirmed this proposition, defect was not amended by a prayer, because the prayer was disjoined from God. But truly in regard to so deep a doubt decide thou not, unless she tell thee who shall be a light between the truth and the understanding.[1] I know not if thou understandest; I speak of Beatrice. Thou shalt see her above, smiling and happy, upon the summit of this mountain."

[1] The question, being one that relates to the Divine will, cannot be answered with full assurance by human reason.

And I, "My lord, let us go on with greater speed, for now I mu not weary as before; and behold now how the bill casts its shadow." "We will go forward with this day," he answered, "as much further as we shall yet be able; but the fact is of other form than thou supposest. Before thou art there-above thou wilt see him return, who is now hidden by the hill-side so that thou dost not make his rays to break. But see there a soul which seated all alone is looking toward us; it will point out to us the speediest way." We came to it. O Lombard soul, how lofty and scornful wast thou; and in the movement of thine eyes grave and slow! It said not anything to us, but let us go on, looking only in manner of a lion when he couches. Virgil, however, drew near to it, praying that it would show to us the best ascent; and it answered not to his request, but of our country and life it asked us. And the sweet Leader began, "Mantua," — and the shade, all in itself recluse, rose toward him from the place where erst it was, saying, "O Mantuan, I am Sordello of thy city,"[1] — and they embraced each other.

[1] Sordello, who lived early in the thirteenth century, was of the family of the Visconti of Mantua. He left his native land and gave up his native tongue to live and write as a troubadour in Provence, but his fame belonged to Italy.

Ah, servile Italy, hostel of grief! ship without pilot in great tempest! not lady of provinces, but a brothel! that gentle soul was so ready, only at the sweet sound of his native land, to give glad welcome here unto his fellow-citizen: and now in thee thy living men exist not without war, and of those whom one wall and one moat shut in one doth gnaw the other. Search, wretched one, around the shores, thy seaboard, and then look within thy bosom, if any part in thee enjoyeth peace! What avails it that for thee Justinian should mend the bridle, if

the saddle be empty? Without this, the shame would be less. Ah folk,[1] that oughtest to be devout and let Caesar sit in the saddle, if thou rightly understandest what God notes for thee! Look how fell this wild beast has become, through not being corrected by the spurs, since thou didst put thy hand upon the bridle. O German Albert, who abandonest her who has become untamed and savage, and oughtest to bestride her saddle-bows, may a just judgment from the stars fall upon thy blood, and may it be strange and manifest, so that thy successor may have fear of it! [2] For thou and thy father, retained up there by greed, have suffered the garden of the empire to become desert. Come thou to see Montecchi and Cappelletti, Monaldi and Filippeschi,[3] thou man without care: those already wretched, and these in dread. Come, cruel one, come, and see the distress of thy nobility, and cure their hurts; and thou shalt see Santafiora[4] how safe it is. Come to see thy Rome, that weeps, widowed and alone, and day and night cries, "My Caesar, wherefore dost thou not keep me company?" Come to see the people, how loving it is; and, if no pity for us move thee, come to be shamed by thine own renown! And if it be lawful for me, O Supreme Jove that wast on earth crucified for us, are thy just eyes turned aside elsewhere? Or is it preparation, that in the abyss of thy counsel thou art making for some good utterly cut off from our perception? For the cities of Italy are all full of tyrants, and every churl that comes playing the partisan becomes a Marcellus?[5]

[1] The Church-folk, the clergy, for whom God has ordained,— "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's."

[2] Albert of Hapsburg, son of the Emperor Rudolph, was elected King of the Romans in 1298, but like his father never went to Italy to he crowned. He was murdered by his nephew, John, called the parricide, in 1308, at Konigsfelden. The successor of Albert was Henry VII. of Luxemborg, who came to Italy in 1311, was crowned at Rome in 1312, and died at Buonconvento the next year. His death ended the hopes of Dante.

[3] Famous families, the first two of Verona, the last two of Orvieto, at enmity with each other in their respective cities, — types of a common condition.

[4]The Counts of Santafiora were once the most powerful Ghibelline nobles in the Sienese territory. Their power had declined since the Hohenstaufen Emperors had been succeeded by the Hapsburgs, and they were now subjected to the Guelphs of Siena.

[5] That is, a hitter opponent of the empire, as the Consul M. Claudius Marcellus was of Caesar.

My Florence! surely thou mayst be content with this digression, which toucheth thee not, thanks to thy people that for itself takes heed. Many have justice at heart but shoot slowly, in order not to come without counsel to the bow; but thy people has it on the edge of its lips. Many reject the common burden, but thy people, eager, replies without being called on, and cries, "I load myself." Now be thou glad, for thou hast truly wherefore: thou rich, thou in peace, thou wise. If I speak the truth, the result hides it not. Athens and Lacedaemon, that made the ancient laws and were so civilized, made toward

living well a little sign, compared with thee that makest such finespun provisions, that to mid November reaches not, what thou in October spinnest. How often in the time that thou rememberest, law, money, office, and custom, hast thou changed, and renewed thy members! And if thou mind thee well and see the light, thou wilt see thyself resembling a sick woman, who cannot find repose upon the feathers, but with her tossing seeks to relieve her pain.

CANTO VII.

Virgil makes himself known to Sordello. — Sordello leads the Poets to the Valley of the Princes who have been negligent of salvation. — He points them out by name.

After the becoming and glad salutations had been repeated three and four times, Sordello drew back and said, “Ye, who are ye?” “Before the souls worthy to ascend to God were turned unto this mountain, my bones had been buried by Octavian; I am Virgil, and for no other sin did I lose heaven, but for not having faith,” thus then replied my Leader.

As is he who suddenly sees a thing before him whereat he marvels, and doth and doth not believe, saying, “It is, it is not,” — so seemed that shade, and then he bent down his brow, and humbly turned again toward him and embraced him where the inferior takes hold.

“O glory of the Latins,” said he, “through whom our language showed what it could do, O honor eternal of the place wherefrom I was, what merit or what grace shows thee to me? If I am worthy to hear thy words, tell me if thou comest from Hell, and from what cloister.” “Through all the circles of the realm of woe,” replied he to him, “am I come hither; Power of Heaven moved me, and with it I come. Not by doing, but by not doing have I lost the sight of the high Sun whom thou desirest, and who by me was known late. A place there is below not sad with torments but with darkness only, where the lamentations sound not as wailings, but are sighs; there stay I with the little innocents bitten by the teeth of death before they were exempt from human sin; there stay I with those who were not vested with the three holy virtues, and without vice knew the others and followed all of them.[1] But if thou knowest and canst, give us some direction whereby we may come more speedily there where Purgatory has its true beginning.” He replied, “A certain place is not set for us; it is permitted me to go upward and around; so far as I can go I join myself to thee as guide. But see how already the day declines, and to go up by night is not possible; therefore it is well to think of some fair sojourn. There are souls here on the right apart; if thou consentest to me I will lead thee to them, and not without delight will they be known to thee.” “How is this?” was answered, “he who might wish to ascend by night, would he be hindered by another, or would he not be able to ascend?” And the good Sordello drew his finger on the ground, saying, “See, only this line thou couldst not pass after set of sun; not because aught else save the nocturnal darkness would give hindrance to going up; that hampers the will with impotence.[2] One could, indeed, in it[3] turn downward and walk the hillside

wandering around, while the horizon holds the day shut up." Then my Lord, as if wondering, said, "Lead us, then, there where thou sayest one may have delight while waiting."

[1] The virtuous Heathen did not possess the so-called theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity; but they practiced the four cardinal virtues of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice.

[2] The allegory is plain: the soul can mount the steep of purification only when illuminated by the Sun of Divine Grace.

[3] In the darkness.

Little way had we gone from that place, when I perceived that the mountain was hollowed out in like fashion as the valleys hollow them here on earth. "Yonder," said that shade, "will we go, where the hillside makes a lap of itself, and there will we await the new day." Between steep and level was a winding path that led us into a side of the dale, where more than by half the edge dies away. Gold and fine silver, and scarlet and white, Indian wood lucid and clear,[1] fresh emerald at the instant it is split, would each be vanquished in color by the herbage and by the flowers set within that valley, as by its greater the less is vanquished. Nature had not only painted there, but with sweetness of a thousand odors she made there one unknown and blended.

[1] The blue of indigo.

Upon the green and upon the flowers I saw souls who, because of the valley, were not visible from without, seated here singing "Salve regina." [1] "Before the lessening sun sinks to his nest," began the Mantuan who had turned us thither, "desire not that among these I guide you. From this bank ye will better become acquainted with the acts and countenances of all of them, than received among them on the level below. He who sits highest and has the semblance of having neglected what he should have done, and who moves not his mouth to the others' songs, was Rudolph the Emperor, who might have healed the wounds that have slain Italy, so that slowly by another she is revived.[2] The next, who in appearance comforts him, ruled the land where the water rises that Moldau bears to Elbe, and Elbe to the sea. Ottocar was his name,[3] and in his swaddling clothes he was better far than bearded Wenceslaus, his son, whom luxury and idleness feed.[4] And that small-nosed one, who seems close in counsel with him who has so benign an aspect, died in flight and disflowering the lily;[5] look there how he beats his breast. See the next who, sighing, has made a bed for his cheek with his hand.[6] Father and father-in-law are they of the harm of France; they know his vicious and foul life, and thence comes the grief that so pierces them. He who looks so large-limbed,[7] and who accords in singing with him of the masculine nose,[8] wore girt the cord of every worth, and if the youth that is sitting behind

him had followed him as king, truly had worth gone from vase to vase, which cannot be said of the other heirs: James and Frederick hold the realms; [9] the better heritage no one possesses. Rarely doth human goodness rise through the branches, and this He wills who gives it, in order that it may be asked from Him. To the large-nosed one also my words apply not less than to the other, Peter, who is singing with him; wherefore Apulia and Provence are grieving now.[10] The plant is as inferior to its seed, as, more than Beatrice and Margaret, Constance still boasts of her husband.[11] See the King of the simple life sitting there alone, Henry of England; he in his branches hath a better issue.[12] That one who lowest among them sits on the ground, looking upward, is William the marquis,[13] for whom Alessandria and her war make Montferrat and the Canavese mourn."

[1] The beginning of a Church hymn to the Virgin, sung after vespers, of which the first verses are: —

Salve, Regina, mater misericordiae!
Vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve!
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae;
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
In hac lacrymarum valle.

[2] The neglect of Italy by the Emperor Rudolph (see the preceding Canto) was not to be repaired by the vain efforts of Henry VII.

[3] Ottocar, King of Bohemia and Duke of Austria, had been slain in battle against Rudolph, on the Marchfeld by the Donau, in 1278; "whereby Austria fell to Rudolph." See Carlyle's Frederick the Great, book ii. ch. 7.

[4] Dante repeats his harsh judgment of Wenceslaus in the nineteenth Canto of Paradise. His first wife was the daughter of Rudolph of Hapsburg. He died in 1305.

[5] This is Philip the Bold of France, 1270-1285. Having invaded Catalonia, in a war with Peter the Third of Aragon, he was driven back, and died on the retreat at Perpignan.

[6] Henry of Navarre, the brother of Thibault, the poet-king (Hell, Canto XXII.). His daughter Joan married Philip the Fair, "the harm of France," the son of Philip the Bold.

[7] Peter of Aragon (died 1285), the husband of Constance, daughter of Manfred (see Canto III.); the youth who is seated behind him is his son Alphonso, who died in 1291.

[8] Charles of Anjou.

[9] The kingdoms of Aragon and Sicily; both James and Frederick were living when Dante thus wrote of them. The "better heritage" was the virtue of their father.

[10] Apulia and Provence were grieving under the rule of Charles II., the degenerate son of Charles of Anjou, who died in 1309.

[11] The meaning is doubtful; perhaps it is, that the children of Charles of Anjou and of Peter of Aragon are as inferior to their fathers, as Charles himself, the husband first of Beatrice of Provence and then of Margaret of Nevers, was inferior to Peter, the husband of Constance.

[12] Henry III., father of Edward I.

[13] William Spadalunga was Marquis of Montferrat and Canavese, the Piedmontese highlands and plain north of the Po. He was Imperial vicar, and the bead of the Ghibellines in this region. In a war with the Guelphs, who had risen in revolt in 1290, he was taken captive at Alessandria, and for two years, till his death, was kept in an iron cage. Dante refers to him in the Convito, iv. 11, as "the good marquis of Montferrat."

CANTO VIII.

Valley of the Princes. — Two Guardian Angels. — Kino Visconti. — The Serpent. — Corrado Malaspina.

It was now the hour that turns back desire in those that sail the sea, and softens their hearts, the day when they have said to their sweet friends farewell, and which pierces the new pilgrim with love, if he hears from afar a bell that seems to deplore the dying day, — when I began to render hearing vain, and to look at one of the souls who, uprisen, besought attention with its hand. It joined and raised both its palms, fixing its eyes toward the orient, as if it said to God, "For aught else I care not." "Te lucis ante"[1] so devoutly issued from his mouth and with such sweet notes that it made me issue forth from my own mind. And then the others sweetly and devoutly accompanied it through all the hymn to the end, having their eyes upon the supernal wheels. Here, reader, sharpen well thine eyes for the truth, for the veil is now indeed so thin that surely passing through within is easy.[2]

[1] The opening words of a hymn sung at Complines, the last service of the day:

Te locis ante terminum, Rerom Creator poscimus, Ut tus pro clementia Sis presul et custodia: —

"Before the close of light, we pray thee, O Creator, that through thy clemency, thou be our watch and guard."

[2] The allegory seems to be, that the soul which has entered upon the way of repentance and purification, but which is not yet securely advanced therein, is still exposed to temptation, especially when the light of the supernal grace does not shine directly upon it. But if the soul have steadfast purpose to resist temptation, and seek aid from God, that aid will not be wanting. The prayer of the Church which is recited after the hymn just cited has these words: "Visit, we pray thee, O Lord, this abode, and drive far from it the snares of the enemy. Let thy holy Angels bide in it, and guard us in peace." Pallid with self distrust, humble with the sense of need, the soul awaits the fulfilment of its prayer. The angels are clad in green, the symbolic color of hope. Their swords are truncated, because needed only for defence.

I saw that army of the gentle-born silently thereafter gazing upward as if in expectation, pallid and humble; and I saw issuing from on high and descending two angels, with two fiery swords truncated and deprived of their points. Green as leaflets just now born were their garments, which, beaten and blown by their green pinions, they trailed behind. One came to stand a little above us, and the other descended on the opposite bank, so that the people were contained between them. I clearly discerned in them their blond heads, but on their faces the eye was dazzled, as a faculty which is confounded by excess. "Both come from the bosom of Mary," said Sordello, "for guard of the valley, because of the serpent

that will come straightway." Whereat I, who knew not by what path, turned me round, and all chilled drew me close to the trusty shoulders.

And Sordello again, "Now let us go down into the valley among the great shades, and we will speak to them; well pleasing will it be to them to see you." Only three steps I think I had descended and I was below; and I saw one who was gazing only at me as if he wished to know me. It was now the time when the air was darkening, but not so that between his eyes and mine it did not reveal that which it locked up before.[1] Towards me he moved, and I moved towards him. Gentle Judge Nino,[2] how much it pleased me when I saw that thou wast not among the damned! No fair salutation was silent between us; then he asked, "How long is it since thou camest to the foot of the mountain across the far waters?"

[1] It was not yet so dark that recognition of one near at hand was difficult, though at a distance it had been impossible.

[2] Nino (Ugolino) de' Visconti of Pisa was the grandson of Count Ugolino, and as the leader of the Pisan Guelphs became his bitter opponent. Sardinia was under the dominion of Pisa, and was divided into four districts, each of which was governed by one of the Pisan nobles, under the title of Judge. Nino had held the judicature of Gallura, where Frate Gomita (see Hell, Canto XXII.) had been his vicar. Nino died in 1296.

"Oh," said I to him, "from within the dismal places I came this morning, and I am in the first life, albeit in going thus, I may gain the other." And when my answer was heard, Sordello[1] and he drew themselves back like folk suddenly bewildered, the one to Virgil, and the other turned to one who was seated there, crying, "Up, Corrado,[2] come to see what God through grace hath willed." Then, turning to me, "By that singular gratitude thou owest unto Him who so hides His own first wherefore[3] that there is no ford to it, when thou shalt be beyond the wide waves, say to my Joan, that for me she cry there where answer is given to the innocent. I do not think her mother[4] loves me longer, since she changed her white wimples,[5] which she, wretched, needs must desire again. Through her easily enough is comprehended how long the fire of love lasts in woman, if eye or touch does not often rekindle it. The viper[6] which leads afield the Milanese will not make for her so fair a sepulture as the cock of Gallura would have done." Thus he said, marked in his aspect with the stamp of that upright zeal which in due measure glows in the heart.

[1] The sun was already hidden behind the mountain when Virgil and Dante came upon Sordello. Sordello had not therefore seen that Dante cast a shadow, and being absorbed in discourse with Virgil had not observed that Dante breathed as a living man.

[2] Corrado, of the great Guelph family of the Malaspina, lords of the Lunigiana, a wide district between Genoa and Pisa.

[3] The reason of that which He wills.

[4] Her mother was Beatrice d' Este, who, in 1300, married Galeazzo de' Visconti of Milan.

[5] The white veil or wimple and black garments were worn by widows. The prophecy that she must needs wish for her white wimple again seems merely to rest on Nino's disapproval of her second marriage.

[6] The viper was the cognizance of the Visconti of Milan.

My greedy eyes were going ever to the sky, ever there where the stars are slowest, even as a wheel nearest the axle. And my Leader, “Son, at what lookest thou up there?” And I to him, “At those three torches with which the pole on this side is all aflame.” [1] And he to me, “The four bright stars which thou sawest this morning are low on the other side, and these are risen where those were.”

[1] These three stars are supposed to symbolize the theological virtues, — faith. hope, and charity, whose light shines when the four virtues of active life grow dim in night.

As he was speaking, lo! Sordello drew him to himself, saying, “See there our adversary,” and pointed his finger that he should look thither. At that part where the little valley has no barrier was a snake, perhaps such as gave to Eve the bitter food. Through the grass and the flowers came the evil trail, turning from time to time its head to its back, licking like a beast that sleeks itself. I did not see, and therefore cannot tell how the celestial falcons moved, but I saw well both one and the other in motion. Hearing the air cleft by their green wings the serpent fled, and the angels wheeled about, up to their stations flying back alike.

The shade which had drawn close to the Judge when he exclaimed, through all that assault had not for a moment loosed its gaze from me. “So may the light that leadeth thee on high find in thine own free-will so much wax as is needed up to the enamelled summit,”[1] it began, “if thou knowest true news of Valdimacra[2] or of the neighboring region, tell it to me, for formerly I was great there. I was called Corrado Malaspina; I am not the ancient,[3] but from him I am descended; to mine own I bore the love which here is refined.” “Oh,” said I to him, “through your lands I have never been, but where doth man dwell in all Europe that they are not renowned? The fame that honoreth your house proclaims its lords, proclaims its district, so that he knows of them who never yet was there; and I swear to you, so may I go above, that your honored race doth not despoil itself of the praise of the purse and of the sword. Custom and nature so privilege it that though the guilty head turn the world awry, alone it goes right and scorns the evil road.”[4] And he, “Now go, for the sun shall not lie seven times in the bed that the Ram covers and bestrides with all four feet,[5] before this courteous opinion will be nailed in the middle of thy head with greater nails than the speech of another, if course of judgment be not arrested.”

[1] So may illuminating grace find the disposition in thee requisite for the support of its light, until thou shalt arrive at the summit of the Mountain, the earthly Paradise enamelled with perpetual flowers.

[2] A part of the Lunigiana.

[3] The old Corrado Malaspina was the husband of Constance, the sister of King Manfred. He died about the middle of the thirteenth century. The second Corrado was his grandson.

[4] This magnificent eulogy of the land and the family of Malaspina is Dante's return for the hospitality which, in 1306, he received from the Marquis Moroello and other members of the house.

[5] Seven years shall not pass, the sun being at this time in the sign of the Ram.

CANTO IX.

Slumber and Dream of Dante. — The Eagle. — Lucia. — The Gate of Purgatory. — The Angelic Gatekeeper. — Seven P's inscribed on Dante's Forehead. — Entrance to the First Ledge.

The concubine of old Tithonus was now gleaming white on the balcony of the orient, forth from the arms of her sweet friend; her forehead was lucent with gems set in the shape of the cold animal that strikes people with its tail.[1] And in the place where we were the night had taken two of the steps with which she ascends, and the third was already bending down its wings, when I, who had somewhat of Adam with me, overcome by sleep, reclined upon the grass, there where all five of us were seated.

[1] By the concubine of old Tithonus, Dante seems to have intended the lunar Aurora, in distinction from the proper wife of Tithonus, Aurora, who precedes the rising Sun, and the meaning of these verses is that " the Aurora before moonrise was lighting up the eastern sky, the brilliant stars of the sign Scorpio were on the horizon, and, finally, it was shortly after 8.30 P.M." (Moore.) "The steps with which the night ascends" are the six hours of the first half of the night, from 6 P.M. to midnight.

At the hour near the morning when the little swallow begins her sad lays,[1] perchance in memory of her former woes, and when our mind, more a wanderer from the flesh and less captive to the thought, is in its visions almost divine,[2] in dream it seemed to me that I saw poised in the sky an eagle with feathers of gold, with wings widespread, and intent to stoop. And it seemed to me that I was there[3] where his own people were abandoned by Ganymede, when he was rapt to the supreme consistory. In myself I thought, "Perhaps this bird strikes only here through wont, and perhaps from other place disdains to carry anyone upward in his feet." Then it seemed to me that, having wheeled a little, it descended terrible as a thunderbolt, and snatched me upwards far as the fire.[4] There it seemed that it and I burned, and the imagined fire so scorched that of necessity the sleep was broken.

[1] The allusion is to the tragic story of Progne and Philomela, turned the one into a swallow, the other into a nightingale. Dante found the tale in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book vi.

[2] Dante passes three nights in Purgatory, and each night his sleep is terminated by a dream towards the hour of dawn, the time when, according to the belief of classical antiquity, the visions of dreams are symbolic and prophetic. (Moore.)

[3] Mt. Ida.

[4] The sphere of fire by which, according to the mediaeval cosmography, the sphere of the air was surrounded.

Not otherwise Achilles shook himself, — turning around his awakened eyes, and not knowing where he was, when his mother from Chiron to Scyros stole him away, sleeping in her arms, thither whence afterwards the Greeks withdrew him,[1] — than I started, as from my face sleep fled away; and I became pale, even

as a man frightened turns to ice. At my side was my Comforter only, and the sun was now more than two hours high,[2] and my face was turned toward the sea. “Have no fear,” said my Lord; “be reassured, for we are at a good point; restrain not, but increase all thy force. Thou art now arrived at Purgatory; see there the cliff that closes it around; see the entrance, there where it appears divided. A while ago in the dawn that precedes the day, when thy soul was sleeping within thee, upon the flowers wherewith the place down yonder is adorned, came a lady, and said, “I am Lucia; let me take this one who is sleeping; thus will I assist him along his way.’ Sordello remained, and the other gentle forms: she took thee, and when the day was bright, she came upward, and I along her footprints. Here she laid thee down: and first her beautiful eyes showed me that open entrance; then she and slumber went away together.” Like a man that in perplexity is reassured, and that alters his fear to confidence after the truth is disclosed to him, did I change; and when my Leader saw me without solicitude, up along the cliff he moved on, and I behind, toward the height.

[1] Statius, in the first book of the Achilleid, tells how Thetis, to prevent Achilles from going to the siege of Troy, bore him sleeping away from his instructor, the centaur Chiron, and carried him to the court of King Lycomedes, on the Island of Scyros, where, though concealed in women’s garments, Ulysses and Diomed discovered him. Statius relates how wonderstruck Achilles was when on awaking he found himself at Scyros: Quae loca? qui fluctus? ubi Pelion? onmia versa Atque ignota videt, dubitatque agnoscere matrem — 249-50.

[2] The morning of Easter Monday.

[3] Lucia seems to be here the symbol of assisting grace, the gratia operans of the school-men. It was she who was called upon by the Virgin (Hell, Canto II.) to aid Dante when he was astray in the wood, and who had moved Beatrice to go to his succor.

Reader, thou seest well how I exalt my theme, and therefore marvel not if with more art I reenforce it.[1]

[1] These words may be intended to call attention to the doctrine which underlies the imagery of the verse.

The entrance within the gate of Purgatory is the assurance of justification, which is the change of the soul from a state of sin to a state of justice or righteousness. Justification itself consists, according to St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologica, Prima Secundae, quaest. cxiii. art. 6 and 8), of four parts: first, the infusion of grace; second, the turning of the free will to God through faith; third, the turning of the free will against sin; fourth, the remission of sin. It must be accompanied by the sacrament of penance, which consists of contrition, confession, and satisfaction by works of righteousness.

Outside the gate of Purgatory justification cannot be complete. The souls in the Ante-Purgatory typify those who have entered on the way towards justification, but have not yet attained it. They undergo a period of mortification to sin, of deliberation, as St. Thomas Aquinas says: “Contingit autem quandoque

quod praecedit aliqua deliberatio quae non est do substantia justificationis sed via in justificationem." Summa Theol., l. c. art. 7.

We drew near to it, and reached such place that there, where at first there seemed to me a rift, like a cleft which divides a wall, I saw a gate, and three steps beneath for going to it of divers colors, and a gatekeeper who as yet said not a word. And as I opened my eye there more and more, I saw him sitting on the upper step, such in his face that I endured it not.[1] And he had in his hand a naked sword, which so reflected the rays toward us that I often raised my sight in vain. "Tell it from there, what would ye?" began he to say; "where is the guide? Beware lest the coming up be harmful to you." [2] "A lady from Heaven with these things acquainted," replied my Master to him, "only just now said to us, 'Go thither, here is the gate.'" "And may she speed your progress in good," began again the courteous gatekeeper, "come forward then unto our steps."

[1] The angel at the gate appears to be the type of the priest who administers absolution.

[2] Unless grace has been infused into the heart it is a sin to present one's self as ready for the sacrament.

Thither we came to the first great stair; it was of white marble so polished and smooth that I mirrored myself in it as I appear. The second, of deeper hue than perse, was of a rough and scorched stone, cracked lengthwise and athwart. The third, which above lies massy, seemed to me of porphyry as flaming red as blood that spirts forth from a vein. Upon this the Angel of God held both his feet, seated upon the threshold that seemed to me stone of adamant.[1] Up over the three steps my Leader drew me with good will, saying, "Beg humbly that he undo the lock." Devoutly I threw myself at the holy feet; I besought for mercy's sake that he would open for me; but first upon my breast I struck three times.[2] Seven P's upon my forehead he inscribed with the point of his sword,[3] and "See that thou wash these wounds when thou art within," he said.

[1] The first step is the symbol of confession, the second of contrition, the third of satisfaction; the threshold of adamant may perhaps signify the authority of the Church.

[2] Three times, in penitence for sins in thought, in word, and in deed.

[3] The seven P's stand for the seven so-called mortal sins, — Peccati, not specific acts, but the evil dispositions of the soul from which all evil deeds spring, — pride, envy, anger, sloth (accidia), avarice, gluttony, and lust. After justification these dispositions which already have been overcome, must be utterly removed from the soul.

Ashes or earth dug out dry would be of one color with his vestment, and from beneath that he drew two keys. One was of gold and the other was of silver; first with the white and then with the yellow he so did to the door, that I was content.[1] "Whenever one of these keys fails, and turns not rightly in the lock," said he to us, "this passage doth not open. More precious is one[2] but the other requires much art and wit before it unlocks, because it is the one that disentangles the

knot. From Peter I hold them; and he told me to err rather in opening than in keeping shut, if but the people prostrate themselves at my feet." Then he pushed the valve of the sacred gate, saying, "Enter, but I give you warning that whoso looks behind returns outside."[3] And when the pivots of that sacred portal, which are of metal, sonorous and strong, were turned within their hinges, Tarpeia roared not so loud nor showed herself so harsh, when the good Metellus was taken from her, whereby she afterwards remained lean.[4]

[1] The golden key is typical of the power to open, and the silver of the knowledge to whom to open.

[2] The gold, more precious because the power of absolution was purchased by the death of the Saviour.

[3] For he who returns to his sins loses the Divine Grace.

[4] This roaring of the gate may, perhaps, be intended to enforce the last words of the angel, and may symbolize the voices of his own sins as the sinner turns his back on them. When Caesar forced the doors of the temple of Saturn on the Tarpeian rock, in order to lay hands on the sacred treasure of Rome, he was resisted by the tribune Metellus.

I turned away attentive to the first tone,[1] and it seemed to me I heard "Te Deum laudamus"[2] in voices mingled with sweet sound. That which I heard gave me just such an impression as we are wont to receive when people stand singing with an organ, and the words now are, now are not caught.

[1] The first sound within Purgatory.

[2] Words appropriate to the entrance of a sinner that repenteth.

CANTO X.

First Ledge: the Proud. — Examples of Humility sculptured on the Rock.

When we were within the threshold of the gate, which the souls' wrong love[1] disuses, because it makes the crooked way seem straight, I heard by its resounding that it was closed again. And, if I had turned my eyes to it, what excuse would have been befitting for the fault?

[1] It is Dante's doctrine that love is the motive of every act; rightly directed, of good deeds; perverted, of evil. See Canto XVII.

We were ascending through a cloven rock, which moved on one side and on the other, even as the wave retreats and approaches. "Here must be used a little art," began my Leader, "in keeping close, now here, now there to the side which recedes."[1] And this made our progress so slow that the waning disk of the moon regained its bed to go to rest, before we had come forth from that needle's eye. But when we were free and open above, where the mountain backward withdraws,[2] I weary, and both uncertain of our way, we stopped upon a level more solitary than roads through deserts. The space from its edge, where it borders the void, to the foot of the high bank which rises only, a human body would measure in three lengths; and as far as my eye could stretch its wings, now on the left and now on the right side, such did this cornice seem to me. Thereon our feet had not yet moved when I perceived that bank round about, which, being perpendicular, allowed no ascent, to be of white marble and adorned with such carvings, that not Polycletus merely but Nature would be put to shame there.

[1] The path was a narrow, steep zigzag, which, as it receded on one side and the other, afforded the better foothold.

[2] Leaving an open space, the first ledge of Purgatory.

The Angel who came to earth with the announcement of the peace, wept for for many years, which opened Heaven from its long interdict, appeared before us here carved in a sweet attitude so truly that he did not seem an image that is silent. One would have sworn that he was saying "Ave;" for there was she imaged who turned the key to open the exalted love. And in her action she had these words impressed, "Ecce ancilla Dei!"[1] as exactly as a shape is sealed in wax.

[1] "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!"

"Keep not thy mind only on one place," said the sweet Master, who had me on that side where people have their heart. Wherefore I moved my eyes and saw

behind Mary, upon that side where he was who was moving me, another story displayed upon the rock; whereupon I passed Virgil and drew near so that it might be set before my eyes. There in the very marble was carved the cart and the oxen drawing the holy ark, because of which men fear an office not given in charge.[1] In front appeared people; and all of them, divided in seven choirs, of two of my senses made the one say "NO," the other "YES, THEY ARE SINGING."[2] In like manner, by the smoke of the incense that was imaged there, mine eyes and nose were made in YES and NO discordant. There, preceding the blessed vessel, dancing, girt up, was the humble Psalmist, and more and less than king was he in that proceeding. Opposite, figured at a window of a great palace, Michal was looking on even as a lady scornful and troubled.[3]

[1] "And they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house.. . and Uzzah and Ahio drave the new cart….and when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." 2 Samuel, vi. 4-7.

[2] The hearing said "No," the sight said "Yes."

[3] "So David went and brought up the ark of God… into the city of David with gladness. And when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart." 2 Samuel, vi. 12-16.

I moved my feet from the place where I was standing to look from near at another story which behind Michal was shining white on me. Here was storied the high glory of the Roman prince, whose worth incited Gregory to his great victory:[1] I speak of Trajan the emperor; and a poor widow was at his bridle in attitude of weeping and of grief. Round about him there seemed a press and throng of knights, and the eagles in the gold above him to the sight were moving in the wind. The wretched woman among all these seemed to be saying, "Lord, do vengeance for me for my son who is slain, whereat I am broken-hearted." And he to answer her, "Now wait till I return;" and she, "My Lord," — like one in whom grief is hasty,— "if thou return not?" And he, "He who shall be where I am will do it for thee." And she, "What will the good deed of another be to thee if thou art mindless of thine own?" Whereon he, "Now comfort thee; for it behoves that I discharge my own duty ere I go; justice requires it, and pity constrains me." He who hath never seen new thing [2] had produced that visible speech, novel to us, since on earth it is not found.

[1] This legend of Trajan had great vogue during the Middle Ages. It was believed that Pope Gregory the Great interceded for him, praying that he might be delivered from Hell; "then God because of these prayers drew that soul from pain and put it into glory." This was Gregory's great victory. See Paradise, XX., p. 131.

[2] God, to whom nothing can be new.

While I was delighting me with regarding the images of such great humilities, and for their Maker's sake dear to behold, "Lo, on this side many people, but they make few steps," murmured the Poet. "They will put us on the way to the high stairs." My eyes that were intent on looking in order to see novelties whereof they are fain, in turning toward him were not slow.

I would not, indeed, Reader, that thou be dismayed at thy good purpose, through hearing how God wills that the debt be paid. Attend not to the form of the suffering; think on what follows; think that at worst beyond the Great Judgment it cannot go!

I began, "Master, that which I see moving toward us, seems to me not persons, but what I know not, my look is so in vain." And he to me, "The heavy condition of their torment so presses them to earth, that mine own eyes at first had contention with it. But look fixedly there, and disentangle with thy sight that which cometh beneath those stones; now thou canst discern how each is smitten."

O proud Christians, wretched weary ones, who, diseased in vision of the mind, have confidence in backward steps, are ye not aware that we are worms born to form the angelic butterfly which flies unto judgment without defence? Why doth your mind float up aloft, since ye are as it were defective insects, even as a worm in which formation fails?

As sometimes for support of ceiling or roof, by way of corbel, a figure is seen joining its knees to its breast, which out of its unreality makes a real pang rise in him who sees it, thus fashioned saw I these when I gave good heed. True it is that they were more or less contracted according as they had more or less upon their backs; and he who had most patience in his looks, weeping, appeared to say, "I can no more."

CANTO XI.

First Ledge: the Proud. — Prayer. — Omberto Aldobrandeschi. — Oderisi d' Agubbio. — Provinzan Salvani.

"O our Father who art in Heaven, not circumscribed, but through the greater love which to the first effects on high Thou hast,[1] praised be Thy name and Thy power by every creature, even as it is befitting to render thanks to Thy sweet effluence. May the peace of Thy Kingdom come towards us, for we to it cannot of ourselves, if it come not, with all our striving. As of their will Thine angels, singing Hosanna, make sacrifice to Thee, so may men make of theirs. Give us this day the daily manna, without which through this rough desert he backward goes, who toils most to go on. And as we pardon every one for the wrong that we have suffered, even do Thou, benignant, pardon and regard not our desert. Our virtue which is easily overcome put not to proof with the old adversary, but deliver from him who so spurs it. This last prayer, dear Lord, truly is not made for ourselves, for it is not needful, but for those who behind us have remained."

[1] Not circumscribed by Heaven, but having Thy seat there because of the love Thou bearest to the first effects — the angels, and the heavens — of Thyself the First Cause.

Thus praying for themselves and us good speed, those souls were going under the weight, like that of which one sometimes dreams, unequally in anguish, all of them round and round, and weary, along the first cornice, purging away the mists of the world. If good they ask for us always there, what can here be said and done for them by those who have a good root for their will? Truly we ought to aid them to wash away the marks which they bore hence, so that pure and light they may go forth unto the starry wheels.

"Ah! so may justice and pity unburden you speedily that ye may be able to move the wing, which according to your desire may lift you, show on which hand is the shortest way towards the stair; and if there is more than one pass, point out to us that which least steeply slopes; for this man who comes with me, because of the load of the flesh of Adam wherewith he is clothed, is chary against his will of mounting up." It was not manifest from whom came the words which they returned to these that he whom I was following had spoken, but it was said, "To the right hand along the bank come ye with us, and ye will find the pass possible for a living person to ascend. And if I were not hindered by the stone which tames my proud neck, wherefore I needs must carry my face low, I would look at that one who is still alive and is not named, to see if I know him, and to make him pitiful of this burden. I was Italian, and born of a great

Tuscan; Guglielmo Aldobrandesco was my father: I know not if his name was ever with you.[1] The ancient blood and the gallant deeds of my ancestors made me so arrogant that, not thinking on the common mother, I held every man in scorn to such extreme that I died therefor, as the Sienese know, and every child in Campagnatico knows it. I am Omberto: and not only unto me Pride doth harm, for all my kinsfolk bath she dragged with her into calamity; and here must I heap this weight on her account till God be satisfied, — here among the dead, since I did it not among the living."

[1] The Aldobrandeschi were the counts of Santa Fiore (see Canto VI.) in the Sienese Maremma. Little is known of them, but that they were in constant feud with Siena. The one who speaks was murdered in his own stronghold of Campagnatico, in 1259.

Listening, I bent down my face; and one of them, not he who was speaking, twisted himself under the weight that hampers him; and he saw me, and recognized me and called out, keeping his eyes with effort fixed on me, who was going along all stooping with him.[1] "Oh," said I to him, "art thou not Oderisi, the honor of Gubbio, and the honor of that art which in Paris is called illumination?" "Brother," said he, "more smiling are the leaves that Franco of Bologna pencils; the honor is now all his, and mine in part.[2] Truly I should not have been so courteous while I lived, because of the great desire of excelling whereon my heart was intent. Of such pride here is paid the fee; and yet I should not be here, were it not that, still having power to sin, I turned me unto God. Oh vainglory of human powers! how little lasts the green upon the top, if it be not followed by dull ages.[3] Cimabue thought to hold the field in painting, and now Giotto has the cry, so that the fame of him is obscured. In like manner one Guido hath taken from the other the glory of the language; and he perhaps is born who shall drive both one and the other from the nest.[4] Worldly renown is naught but a breath of wind, which now comes hence and now comes thence, and changes name because it changes quarter. What more fame shalt thou have, if thou strippest old flesh from thee, than if thou hadst died ere thou hadst left the pap and the chink,[5] before a thousand years have passed? — which is a shorter space compared to the eternal than a movement of the eyelids to the circle that is slowest turned in Heaven. With him who takes so little of the road in front of me, all Tuscany resounded, and now he scarce is lisped of in Siena, where he was lord when the Florentine rage was destroyed,[6] which at that time was proud, as now it is prostitute. Your reputation is color of grass that comes and goes, and he[7] discolors it through whom it came up fresh from the earth." And I to him, "Thy true speech brings good humility to my heart, and thou allayest a great swelling in me; but who is he of whom thou now wast speaking?" "He is," he answered, "Provinzan Salvani;[8] and he is here, because he was presumptuous in bringing

all Siena to his hands. He has gone thus — and he goes without repose — ever since he died: such money doth he pay in satisfaction, who is on earth too daring." And I, "If that spirit who awaits the verge of life ere he repents abides there below, and unless good prayer further him ascends not hither, ere as much time pass us he lived, how has this coining been granted unto him?" "When he was living most renowned," said he, "laying aside all shame, of his own accord he planted himself in the Campo of Siena,[9] and there, to draw his friend from the punishment he was enduring in the prison of Charles, brought himself to tremble in every vein. More I will not say, and I know that I speak darkly; but little time will pass, before thy neighbors will so act that thou wilt he able to gloss it.[10] This deed released him from those limits."[11]

[1] This stooping is the symbol of Dante's consciousness of pride as his own besetting sin.

[2] Oderisi of Gubbio and Franco of Bologna were both eminent in the art called miniare in Italian, enluminer in French.

[3] Ages in which no progress is made.

[4] The first Guido is doubtless Guido Guinicelli, whom Dante calls (see Canto XXVI.) his master; the other probably Dante's friend, Guido Cavalcanti.

[5] Dante's words are pappo and dindi, childish terms for "bread" and "money."

[6] The mad Florentine people were utterly cast down in 1260, at the battle of Montaperti.

[7] The sun.

[8] Provinzano Salvani was one of the chief supporters of the Ghibelline cause in Tuscany. He was a man of great qualities and capacity, but proud and presumptuous. Defeated and taken prisoner at the battle of Colle, in 1269, he was beheaded.

[9] The Campo of Siena is her chief public square and marketplace, set round with palaces. The friend of Provinzano is said by the old commentators to have fought for Conradin against Charles of Anjou, and, being taken captive, to have been condemned to death. His ransom was fixed at ten thousand florins. Provinzano, not being able to pay this sum from his own means, took his seat in the Campo and humiliated himself to beg of the passers-by.

[10] The meaning of the dark words seems to be: Exile and poverty will compel thee to beg, and begging to tremble in every vein.

[11] This deed of humility and charity released him from the necessity of tarrying outside the gate of Purgatory.

CANTO XII.

First Ledge: the Proud. — Examples of the punishment of Pride graven on the pavement. — Meeting with an Angel who removes one of the P's. — Ascent to the Second Ledge.

Side by side, like oxen who go yoked, I went on with that burdened spirit so long as the sweet Pedagogue allowed it; but when he said, "Leave him, and come on, for here it is well that, both with sail and oars, each as much as he can should urge his bark," I straitened up my body again, as is required for walking, although my thoughts remained both bowed down and abated.

I was moving on, and following willingly the steps of my Master, and both now were showing how light we were, when he said to me, "Turn thine eyes downward; it will be well for thee, in order to solace the way, to look upon the bed of thy footprints." As above the buried, so that there may be memory of them, their tombs in earth bear inscribed that which they were before, — whence oftentimes is weeping for them there, through the pricking of remembrance, which only to the pious gives the spur, — so saw I figured there, but of better semblance in respect of skill, all that for pathway juts out from the mountain.

I saw him who was created more noble than any other creature,[1] down from heaven with lightning flash descending, at one side.

[1] Lucifer.

I saw Briareus[1] transfixed by the celestial bolt, lying at the other side, heavy upon the earth in mortal chill. I saw Thymbraeus,[2] I saw Pallas and Mars, still armed, around their father, gazing at the scattered limbs of the giants.

[1] Examples from classic and biblical mythology alternate.

[2] Apollo, so called from his temple at Thymbra, not far from Troy, where Achilles is said to have slain Paris. Virgil (Georgics, iv. 323) uses this epithet.

I saw Nimrod at the foot of his great toil, as if bewildered, and gazing at the people who in Shinar had with him been proud.

O Niobe! with what grieving eyes did I see thee portrayed upon the road between thy seven and seven children slain!

O Saul! how on thine own sword here didst thou appear dead on Gilboa, that after felt not rain or dew![1]

[1] I Samuel, xxxi. 4, and 2 Samuel, i. 24.

O mad Arachne,[1] so I saw thee already half spider, wretched on the shreds of the work that to thy harm by thee was made!

[1] Changed to a spider by Athena, whom she had challenged to a trial of skill at the loom.

O Rehoboam! here thine image seems not now to threaten, but full of fear, a chariot bears it away before any one pursues it.[1]

[1] 1 Kings, xii. 13-18.

The hard pavement showed also how Alcmaeon made the ill-fated ornament seem costly to his mother.[1]

[1] Amphiaraus, the soothsayer, foreseeing his own death if he went to the Theban war, hid himself to avoid being forced to go. His wife, Eriphyle, bribed by a golden necklace, betrayed his hiding-place, and was killed by her son Alcmaeon, for thus bringing about his father's death.

It showed how his sons threw themselves upon Sennacherib within the temple, and how they left him there dead.[1]

[1] 2 Kings, xix. 37.

It showed the ruin and the cruel slaughter that Tomyris wrought, when she said to Cyrus, "For blood thou hast thirsted, and with blood I fill thee."

[1] Herodotus (i. 214) tells how Tomyris, Queen of the Massagetae, having defeated and slain Cyrus, filled a skin full of human blood, and plunged his head in it with words such as Dante reports, and which he derived from Orosius, Histor. ii. 7.

It showed how the Assyrians fled in rout after Holofernes was killed, and also the remainder of the punishment.[1]

[1] Judith, xv. 1.

I saw Troy in ashes, and in caverns. O Ilion! how cast down and abject the image which is there discerned showed thee!

What master has there been of pencil or of style that could draw the shadows and the lines which there would make every subtile genius wonder? Dead the dead, and the living seemed alive. He who saw the truth saw not better than I all that I trod on while I went bent down. — Now be ye proud, and go with haughty look, ye sons of Eve, and bend not down your face so that ye may see your evil path!

More of the mountain had now been circled by us, and of the sun's course far more spent, than my mind, not disengaged, was aware, when he, who always in advance attent was going on, began, "Lift up thy head; there is no more time for going thus abstracted. See there an Angel, who is hastening to come toward us: see how from the service of the day the sixth hand-maiden returns.[1] With reverence adorn thine acts and thy face so that he may delight to direct us upward. Think that this day never dawns again."

[1] The sixth hour of the day is coming to its end, near noon.

I was well used to his admonition ever to lose no time, so that on that theme he could not speak to me obscurely.

To us came the beautiful creature, clothed in white, and in his face such as seems the tremulous morning star. Its arms it opened, and then it opened its wings; it said, “Come: here at hand are the steps, and easily henceforth one ascends. To this invitation very few come. O human race, born to fly upward, why before a little wind dost thou so fall?”

He led us to where the rock was cut; here he struck his wings across my forehead,[1] then promised me secure progress.

[1] Removing the first P that the Angel of the Gate had incised on Dante’s brow.

As on the right hand, in going up the mountain,[1] where sits the church that dominates her the well-guided[2] city above Rubaconte,[3] the bold flight of the ascent is broken by the stairs, which were made in an age when the record and the stave were secure,[4] in like manner, the bank which falls here very steeply from the next round is slackened; but on this side and that the high rock grazes.[5] As we turned our persons thither, voices sang “Beati pauperes spiritu”[6] in such wise that speech could not tell it. Ah, how different are these passes from those of Hell! for here through songs one enters, and there below through fierce lamentings.

[1] The hill of San Miniato, above Florence.

[2] Ironical.

[3] The upper bridge at Florence across the Arno, named after Messer Rubaconte di Mandella, podesta of Florence, who laid the first stone of it in 1237; now called the Ponte alle Grazie, after a little chapel built upon it in 1471, and dedicated to Our Lady of Grace.

[4] In the good old time when men were honest. In 1299 one Messer Niccola Acciaioli, in order to conceal a fraudulent transaction, had a leaf torn out from the public notorial record; and about the same time an officer in charge of the revenue from salt, for the sake of private gain, measured the salt he received with an honest measure, but that which he sold with a measure diminished by the removal of a stave.

[5] The stairway is so narrow.

[6] “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” As Dante passes from each round of Purgatory, an angel removes the P which denotes the special sin there purged away. And the removal is accompanied with the words of one of the Beatitudes.

Now we were mounting up over the holy stairs, and it seemed to me I was far more light than I had seemed on the plain before. Whereon I, “Master, say, what heavy thing has been lifted from me, so that almost no weariness is felt by me as I go on?” He answered, “When the P’s that almost extinct[1] still remain on thy countenance shall be, as one is, quite erased, thy feet will be so conquered by good will that not only they will not feel fatigue, but it will be delight to them to be urged up.” Then I did like those who are going with something on their head,

unknown by them unless the signs of others make them suspect; wherefore the hand assists to ascertain, and seeks and finds, and performs that office which cannot be accomplished by the sight; and with the fingers of my right hand outspread, I found only six those letters which he of the keys had encised upon my temples: looking at which my Leader smiled.

[1] Almost extinct, because, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, “Pride by which we are chiefly turned from God is the first and the origin of all sins.” He adds, “Pride is said to be the beginning of every sin, not because every single sin has its source in pride, but because every kind of sin is born of pride.” Summa Theol., II. 2, quaest. 162, art. 7.

CANTO XIII.

Second Ledge the Envious. — Examples of Love. — The Shades in haircloth, and with sealed eyes. — Sapia of Siena.

We were at the top of the stairway, where the mountain, ascent of which frees one from ill, is the second time cut back. There a cornice binds the hill round about, in like manner as the first, except that its arc bends more quickly. No shadow is there, nor mark which is apparent [1] so that the bank appears smooth and so the path, with the livid color of the stone.

[1] No sculptured or engraved scenes.

"If to enquire one waits here for people," said the Poet, "I fear that perhaps our choice will have too much delay." Then he set his eyes fixedly upon the sun, made of his right side the centre for his movement, and turned the left part of himself. "O sweet light, with confidence in which I enter on the new road, do thou lead us on it," he said, "as there is need for leading here within. Thou warmest the world, thou shinest upon it; if other reason prompt not to the contrary, thy rays ought ever to be guides."

As far as here on earth is counted for a mile, so far had we now gone there, in little time because of ready will; and towards us were heard to fly, not however seen, spirits uttering courteous invitations to the table of love. The first voice that passed flying, "Virum non habent,"[1] loudly said, and went on behind us reiterating it. And before it had become quite inaudible through distance, another passed by, crying, "I am Orestes," [2] and also did not stay. "O Father," said I, "what voices are these?" and even as I was asking, lo! the third, saying, "Love them from whom ye have had wrong." And the good Master: "This circle scourges the sin of envy, and therefore from love are drawn the cords of the scourge. The curb must be of the opposite sound; I think that thou wilt hear it before thou arrivest at the pass of pardon.[3] But fix thine eyes very fixedly through the air, and thou wilt see in front of us people sitting, and each is seated against the rock." Then more than before I opened my eyes; I looked in front of me, and saw shades with cloaks in color not different from the stone. And when we were a little further forward, I heard them crying, "Mary, pray for us!" crying, "Michael," and "Peter," and all the Saints.

[1] "They have no wine." — John ii. 3. The words of Mary at the wedding feast of Cana, symbolic of a kindness that is a rebuke of envy.

[2] The words of Pylades, before Aegisthus, when contending with Orestes to be put to death in his stead.

[3] At the stair to the third ledge, at the foot of which stands the angel who cancels the sin of envy.

I do not believe there goes on earth to-day a man so hard that he had not been pricked by compassion at that which I then saw. For when I had approached so near to them that their actions came surely to me, tears were drawn from my eyes by heavy grief. They seemed to me covered with coarse haircloth, and one supported the other with his shoulders, and all were supported by the bank. Thus the blind, who lack subsistence, stand at pardons[1] to beg for what they need, and one bows his head upon another, so that pity may quickly be moved in others, not only by the sound of the words, but by the sight which implores no less. And as to the blind the sun profits not, so to the shades, there where I was now speaking, the light of Heaven wills not to make largess of itself; for a wire of iron pierces and sews up the eyelids of all; even as is done to a wild sparrow-hawk, because it stays not quiet.

[1] On occasion of special indulgences the beggars gather at the door of churches frequented by those who seek the pardons to be obtained within.

It seemed to me I was doing outrage as I went on, seeing others, not myself being seen, wherefore I turned me to my sage Counsel; well did he know what the dumb wished to say, and therefore waited not my asking, but said, “Speak, and be brief and to the point.”

Virgil was coming with me on that side of the cornice from which one may fall, because it is encircled by no rim. On the other side of me were the devout shades, that through the horrible stitches were pressing out the tears so that they bathed their cheeks. I turned me to them, and, “O folk secure,” I began, “of seeing the lofty light which alone your desire holds in its care, may grace speedily dissolve the scum of your consciences so that the stream of memory through them may descend clear,[1] tell me, for it will be gracious and dear to me, if there be a soul here among you that is Latin, and perhaps it will be good for him if I learn it.” “O my brother, each is a citizen of one true city,[2] but thou meanest, who lived in Italy while a pilgrim.”[3] This it seemed to me to hear for answer somewhat further on than where I was standing; wherefore I made myself heard still more that way. Among the others I saw a shade that was expectant in look; and, if any one should wish to ask, How? — like a blind man it was lifting up its chin. “Spirit,” said I, “that humblest thyself in order to ascend, if thou art that one which answered me, make thyself known to me either by place or by name.” “I was a Sienese,” it answered, “and with these others I cleanse here my guilty life, weeping to Him that He grant Himself to us. Sapient I was not, although I was called Sapia, and I was far more glad of others’ harm than of my own good fortune. And that thou mayst not believe that I deceive thee, bear if I was foolish as I tell thee. The arch of my years already descending,

my fellow-citizens were joined in battle near to Colle[4] with their adversaries, and I prayed God for that which He willed. They were routed there, and turned into the bitter passes of flight; and I, seeing the pursuit, experienced a joy unmatched by any other; so much that I turned upward my audacious face, crying out to God, 'Now no more I fear thee;' as the blackbird doth because of a little fair weather. At the very end of my life I desired peace with God; and even yet my debt would not be lessened by penitence,[5] had it not been that Pier Pettinagno,[6] who out of charity was sorry for me, held me in memory in his holy prayers. But thou, who art thou that goest asking of our conditions, and bearest thine eyes loose as I think, and breathing dost speak?" "My eyes," said I, "will yet be taken from me here but a little time, for small is the offence committed through their being turned with envy. Far greater is the fear, with which my soul is in suspense, of the torment beneath, and already the load down there weighs upon me. And she to me, "Who then hath led thee here up among us, if thou thinkest to return below?" And I, "This one who is with me, and says not a word: and I am alive; and therefore ask of me, spirit elect, if thou wouldst that I should yet move for thee on earth my mortal feet." "Oh, this is so strange a thing to hear," she replied, "that it is great sign that God loves thee; therefore assist me sometimes with thy prayer. And I beseech thee, by that which thou most desirest, if ever thou tread the earth of Tuscany, that with my kindred thou restore my fame. Thou wilt see them among that vain people which hopes in Talamone,[7] and will waste more hope there, than in finding the Diana[8] but the admirals will stake the most there.[9]

[1] Being purified from sin they will retain no memory of it.

[2] "Fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." — Ephesians, ii. 19.

[3] "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." — Hebrews, xiii. 14.

[4] This was the battle in 1259, in which the Florentines routed die Sienese Ghibellines, at whose head was Provenzan Salvani. who was slain. See Canto XI.

[5] I should not yet within Purgatory have diminished my debt of expiation, but, because I delayed repentance till the hour of Death, I should still be outside the gate.

[6] A poor comb-dealer, a man of kind heart, honest dealings, and good deeds, and still remembered for them in Siena. He died in 1289.

[7] A little port on the coast of Tuscany, on which the Sienese wasted toil and money in the vain hope that by strengthening and enlarging it they could make themselves rivals at sea of the Pisans and Genoese.

[8] A subterranean stream supposed to flow beneath the city.

[9] Of these last words the meaning is obscure.

CANTO XIV.

Second Ledge: the Envious — Guido del Duca. — Rinieri de' Calboli. — Examples of the punishment of Envy.

"Who is this that circles our mountain ere death have given him flight, and opens and shuts his eyes at his own will?"[1] "I know not who he is, but I know that he is not alone. Do thou, who art nearer to him, ask him; and sweetly, so that he may speak, accost him." Thus two spirits, leaning one to the other, discoursed of me there on the right hand, then turned up their faces to speak to me. And one of them said, "O soul that still fixed in thy body goest on toward heaven, for charity console us, and tell us whence thou comest, and who thou art; for thou makest us so marvel at this thy grace, as needs must a thing that never was before." And I, "Through mid Tuscany there wanders a little stream, that has its rise on Falterona,[2] and a hundred miles of coarse does not suffice it. From thereupon I bring this body. To tell you who I am would be to speak in vain, for my name as yet makes no great sound." "If I grasp aright thy meaning with my understanding," then replied to me he who had spoken first, "thou speakest of the Arno." And the other said to him, "Why did he conceal the name of that river, even as one does of horrible things?" And the shade of whom this was asked, delivered itself thus, "I know not, but truly it is fit that the name of such a valley perish, for from its source (where the rugged mountain chain, from which Pelorus[3] is cut off, is so teeming that in few places it passes beyond that mark), far as there where it gives back in restoration that which heaven dries up of the sea (wherefrom the rivers have what flows in them), virtue is driven away as an enemy by all men, like a snake, either through misfortune of the place, or through evil habit that incites them. Wherefore the inhabitants of the wretched valley have so changed their nature that it seems as though Circe had had them in her feeding. Among foul hogs,[4] more fit for acorns than for other food made for human use, it first directs its poor path. Then, coming down, it finds curs more snarling, than their power warrants,[5] and at them disdainfully it twists its muzzle.[6] It goes on falling, and the more it swells so much the more the accursed and ill-fated ditch finds the dogs becoming wolves.[7] Descending then through many hollow gulfs, it finds foxes[8] so full of fraud, that they fear not that wit may entrap them. Nor will I leave to speak though another hear me: and well it will be for this one if hereafter he mind him of that which a true spirit discloses to me.

[1] These words are spoken by Guido del Duca, who is answered by Rinieri de' Calboli; both of them from the Romagna.

[2] One of the highest of the Tuscan Apennines.

[3] The north-eastern promontory of Sicily.

[4] The people of the Casentino, the upper valley of the Arno.

[5] The Aretines.

[6] Turning westward.

[7] The wolves of Florence.

[8] The Pisans.

"I see thy grandson,[1] who becomes hunter of those wolves upon the bank of the fierce stream, and terrifies them all. He sells their flesh,[2] it being yet alive; then he slays them, like an old wild beast; many of life, himself of honor he deprives. Bloody he comes forth from the dismal wood;[3] he leaves it such, that from now for a thousand years, in its primal state it is not rewooded." As at the announcement of grievous ills, the face of him who listens is disturbed, from whatsoever side the danger may assail him, so I saw the other soul, that was turned to hear, become disturbed and sad, when it had gathered to itself the words.

[1] Fulcieri da Calvoli, so named by Villani (viii. 69), "a fierce and cruel man," was made podesta of Florence in 1302. He put to death many of the White Guelphs, and banished more of them.

[2] Bribed by the opposite party.

[3] Florence, spoiled and undone.

The speech of one and the look of the other made me wishful to know their names, and I made request for it, mixed with prayers. Wherefore the spirit which first had spoken to me began again, "Thou wishest that I abase myself in doing that for thee which thou wilt not do for me; but since God wills that such great grace of His shine through in thee, I will not be chary to thee; therefore know that I am Guido del Duca. My blood was so inflamed with envy, that had I seen a man becoming joyful, thou wouldst have seen me overspread with livid hue. Of my sowing I reap this straw. O human race, why dost thou set thy heart there where is need of exclusion of companionship?

"This one is Rinier; this is the glory and the honor of the house of Calboli,[1] where no one since has made himself heir of his worth. And between the Po and the mountain,[2] and the sea[3] and the Reno,[4] not his blood alone has become stripped of the good required for truth and for delight; for within these limits the ground is so full of poisonous stocks, that slowly would they now die out through cultivation. Where is the good Lizio, and Arrigo Manardi, Pier Traversaro, and Guido di Carpigna? O men of Romagna turned to bastards!

When in Bologna will a Fabbro take root again? When in Faenza a Bernardin di Fosco, the noble scion of a mean plant? Marvel not, Tuscan, if I weep, when I remember with Guido da Prata, Ugolin d' Azzo who lived with us, Federico Tignoso and his company, the house of Traversara, and the Anastagi, (both the one race and the other is without heir), the ladies and the cavaliers, the toils and the pleasures for which love and courtesy inspired our will, there where hearts have become so wicked. O Brettinoro! why dost thou not flee away, since thy family hath gone, and many people, in order not to be guilty? Well doth Bagnacaval that gets no more sons; and ill doth Castrocaro, and worse Conio that takes most trouble to beget such counts. Well will the Pagani do when their Demon shall go from them;[6] yet not so that a pure report of them can ever remain. O Ugolin de' Fantolin! thy name is secure, since one who, degenerating, can make it dark is no longer awaited. But go thy way, Tuscan, now; for now it pleases me far more to weep than to speak, so much hath our discourse wrung my mind."

[1] A noble Guelph family of Forli.

[2] The Apennines.

[3] The Adriatic.

[4] Near Bologna.

[5] These and the others named afterwards were well-born, honorable, and courteous men in Romagna in the thirteenth century. What is known of them may be found in Benvenuto da Imola's comment, and in that of Scartazzini.

[6] The Pagani were lords of Faenza and Imola (see Hell, Canto XXVII); the Demon was Mainardo, who died in 1302.

We knew that those dear souls heard us go; therefore by silence they made us confident of the road. After we had become alone by going on, a voice that seemed like lightning when it cleaves the air, came counter to us, saying, "Everyone that findeth me shall slay me," [1] and fled like thunder which rolls away, if suddenly the cloud is rent. Soon as our hearing had a truce from it, lo! now another with so great a crash that it resembled thunderings in swift succession: "I am Aglauros who became a stone."[2] And then to draw me close to the Poet, I backward and not forward took a step. Now was the air quiet on every side, and he said to me, "That was the hard curb[3] which ought to hold man within his bound; but ye take the bait, so that the hook of the old adversary draws you to him, and therefore little avails bridle or lure. Heaven calls you, and around you circles, displaying to you its eternal beauties, and your eye looks only on the ground; wherefore He who discerns everything scourges you.

[1] The words of Cain — Genesis, iv. 14.

[2] Daughter of Cecrops, changed to stone because of envy of her sister.

[3] These examples of the fatal consequences of the sin.

CANTO XV.

Second Ledge: the Envious. — An Angel removes the second P from Dante's forehead. — Discourse concerning the Sharing of Good. — Ascent to the Third Ledge: the Wrathful. — Examples of Forbearance seen in Vision.

As much as appears, between the beginning of the day and the close of the third hour, of the sphere that ever in manner of a child is sporting, so much now, toward the evening, appeared to be remaining of his course for the sun.[1] It was vespers[2] there,[3] and here midnight; and the rays struck us across the nose,[4] because the mountain had been so circled by us that we were now going straight toward the sunset, when I felt my forehead weighed down by the splendor far more than at first, and the things not known were a wonder to me.[5] Wherefore I lifted my hands toward the top of my brows, and made for myself the visor that lessens the excess of what is seen.

[1] The sun was still some three hours from his setting. The sphere that ever is sportive like a child has been variously interpreted; perhaps Dante only meant the sphere of the heavens which by its ever varying aspect suggests the image of a playful spirit.

[2] Dante uses "vespers" as the term for the last of the four canonical divisions of the day; that is, from three to six P.M. See Convito, iv. 23. Three o'clock in Purgatory corresponds with midnight in Italy.

[3] In Italy.

[4] Full in the face.

[5] The source of this increase of brightness being unknown, it caused him astonishment.

As when from water, or from the mirror, the ray leaps to the opposite quarter, and, mounting up in like manner to that in which it descends, at equal distance departs as much from the falling of the stone,[1] as experiment and art show; so it seemed to me that I was struck by light reflected there in front of me, from which my sight was swift to fly. "What is that, sweet Father, from which I cannot screen my sight so that it avails me," said I, "and which seems to be moving toward us?" "Marvel not if the family of Heaven still dazzle thee," he replied to me; "it is a messenger that comes to invite men to ascend. Soon will it be that to see these things will not be grievous to thee, but will be delight to thee as great as nature fitted thee to feel."

[1] I.e., the perpendicular, at the point of incidence.

When we had reached the blessed Angel, with a glad voice he said, "Enter ye here to a stairway far less steep than the others."

We were mounting, already departed thence, and “Beati misericordes”[1] had been sung behind us, and “Rejoice thou that overcomest.” [2] My Master and I, we two alone, were going on upward, and I was thinking to win profit as we went from his words; and I addressed me to him, thus enquiring, “What did the spirit from Romagna mean, mentioning exclusion and companionship?”[3] Wherefore he to me, “Of his own greatest fault he knows the harm, and therefore it is not to be wondered at if he reprove it, in order that there may be less lamenting on account of it. Because your desires are directed there, where, through companionship, a share is lessened, envy moves the bellows for your sighs. But if the love of the highest sphere[4] had turned your desire on high, that fear would not be in your breast; for the more there are who there say ‘ours,’ so much the more of good doth each possess, and the more of charity burns in that cloister.”[5] “I am more hungering to be contented,” said I, “than if I had at first been silent, and more of doubt I assemble in my mind. How can it be that a good distributed makes more possessors richer with itself, than if by few it is possessed?”[6] And he to me, “Because thou fastenest thy mind only on earthly things, from true light thou gatherest darkness. That infinite and ineffable Good which is on high, runs to love even as the sunbeam comes to a lucid body. As much of itself it gives as it finds of ardor; so that how far soever charity extends, beyond it doth the eternal bounty increase. And the more the people who are intent on high the more there are for loving well, and the more love is there, and like a mirror one reflects to the other. And if my discourse appease not thy hunger, thou shalt see Beatrice, and she will fully take from thee this and every other longing. Strive only that soon may be extinct, as two already are, the five wounds that are closed up by being painful.”[7]

[1] “Blessed are the merciful.”

[2] At the passage from each round, the Angel at the foot of the stairs repeats words from the Beatitudes adapted to those purified from the sin punished upon the ledge which is being left.

[3] In the last canto, Guido del Duca had exclaimed, “O human race, why dost thou set thy heart there where companionship must needs be excluded!”

[4] The Empyrean.

[5] “Since good, the more Communicated, the more abundant grows.” Milton, Paradise Lost, v. 73.

[6] “True love in this differs from gold and clay, That to divide is not to take away.” — Shelley, Epipsychidion.

[7] The pain of contrition.

As I was about to say “Thou satisfiest me,” I saw myself arrived on the next round,[1] so that my eager eyes made me silent. There it seemed to me I was of a sudden rapt in an ecstatic vision, and saw many persons in a temple, and a lady

at the entrance, with the sweet action of a mother, saying, “My son, why hast thou done thus toward us? Lo, sorrowing, thy father and I were seeking thee;” and when here she was silent, that which first appeared, disappeared.

[1] Where the sin of anger is expiated.

Then appeared to me another, with those waters down along her cheeks which grief distils when it springs from great despite toward others, and she was saying, “If thou art lord of the city about whose name was such great strife among the gods, and whence every science sparkles forth, avenge thyself on those audacious arms, that have embraced our daughter, O Pisistratus.” And the lord appeared to me, benign and mild, to answer her, with temperate look, “What shall we do to him who desires ill for us, if he who loves us is by us condemned?”[1]

[1] Dante translated this story from Valerius Maximus, Facta et dicta mem., vi. 1.

Then I saw people kindled with fire of wrath, killing a youth with stones, loudly crying to each other only, “Slay, slay.” And I saw him bowed by death, which now was weighing on him, toward the ground, but in such great strife he ever made of his eyes gates for heaven, praying to the high Lord, that He would pardon his persecutors, with that aspect which unlocks pity.[1]

[1] See Acts, vii. 55-60.

When my mind returned outwardly to the things which outside of it are true, I recognized my not false errors. My Leader, who could see me do like a man who looses himself from slumber, said, “What ails thee, that thou canst not support thyself? but art come more than a half league veiling thine eyes, and with thy legs staggering like one whom wine or slumber bends.” “O sweet Father mine, if thou harkenest to me I will tell thee,” said I, “what appeared to me when my legs were thus taken from me.” And he, “If thou hadst a hundred masks upon thy face, thy thoughts howsoever small would not be hidden from me. That which thou hast seen was in order that thou excuse not thyself from opening thy heart to the waters of peace which are poured forth from the eternal fountain. I did not ask, ‘What ails thee?’ for the reason that he does who looks only with the eye which hath no seeing when the body lies inanimate; but I asked, in order to give vigor to the foot; thus it behoves to spur the sluggards, slow to use their wakefulness when it returns.”

We were going on through the vesper time, forward intent so far as the eyes could reach against the bright evening rays; when, lo, little by little, a smoke came toward us, dark as night; iior was there place to shelter ourselves from it. This took from us our eyes and the pure air.

CANTO XVI.

Third Ledge the Wrathful. — Marco Lombardo. — His discourse on Free Will, and the Corruption of the World.

Gloom of hell, or of night deprived of every planet, under a barren sky, obscured by clouds as much as it can be, never made so thick a veil to my sight nor to my feeling so harsh of tissue as that smoke which covered us there; so that my eye endured not to stay open[1] wherefore my sage and trusty Escort drew to my side and offered me his shoulder. Even as a blind man goes behind his guide, in order not to stray, and not to butt against anything that may hurt or perhaps kill him, I went along, through the bitter and foul air, listening to my Leader, who was ever saying, “Take care that thou be not cut off from me.”

[1] The gloom and the smoke symbolize the effects of anger on the soul.

I heard voices, and each appeared to be praying for peace and mercy to the Lamb of God that taketh sins away. Only “Agnus Dei[1] were their exordiums: one word there was in all, and one measure; so that among them seemed entire concord. “Are these spirits, Master, that I hear?” said I. And he to me, “Thou apprehendest truly; and they go loosening the knot of anger.” “Now who art thou that cleavest our smoke, and yet dost speak of us even as if thou didst still divide the time by calends?” [2] Thus by one voice was said: whereon my Master said, “Reply, and ask if by this way one goeth up.” And I, “O creature, that cleansest thyself in order to return beautiful unto Him who made thee, a marvel shalt thou hear if thou accompanyest me.” “I will follow thee, so far as is permitted me,” it replied, “and if the smoke allows not seeing, in its stead hearing shall keep us joined.” Then I began, “With that swathing band which death unbinds I go upward, and I came hither through the infernal anguish. And if God bath so enclosed me in His grace that He wills that I should see His court by a mode wholly out of modern usage, conceal not from me who thou wert before thy death, but tell it to me, and tell me if I am going rightly to the pass; and let thy words be our guides.” “Lombard I was, and was called Marco; the world I knew, and that worth I loved, toward which every one hath now unbent his bow. For mounting thou art going rightly.” Thus he replied, and added, “I pray thee that thou pray for me when thou shalt he above.” And I to him, “I pledge my faith to thee to do that which thou askest of me; but I am bursting inwardly with a doubt, if I free not myself of it; at first it was simple, and now it is made double by thy words which make certain to me, here as elsewhere, that wherewith I couple it.[3] The world is indeed as utterly deserted by every virtue as thou declarest to me,

and with iniquity is big and covered; but I pray that thou point out to me the cause, so that I may see it, and that I may show it to others; for one sets it in the heavens, and one here below."

[1] "The Lamb of God."

[2] By those in the eternal world dine is not reckoned by earth divisions.

[3] The doubt was occasioned by Guido del Duca's words (Canto XV.), in regard to the prevalence of evil in Tuscany, arising either from misfortune of the place, or through the bad habits of men. The fact of the iniquity of men was now reaffirmed by Marco Lombardo; Dante accepts the fact as certain, and his doubt is coupled with it.

A deep sigh that grief wrung into "Ay me!" he first sent forth, and then began, "Brother, the world is blind, and thou forsooth comest from it. Ye who are living refer every cause upward to the heavens only, as if they of necessity moved all things with themselves. If this were so, free will would be destroyed in you, and there would be no justice in having joy for good, and grief for evil. The heavens initiate your movements: I do not say all of them; but, supposing that I said it, light for good and for evil is given to you; and free will, which, if it endure fatigue in the first battles with the heavens, afterwards, if it be well nurtured, conquers everything. To a greater force, and to a better nature, ye, free, are subjected, and that creates the mind in you, which the heavens have not in their charge.' Therefore if the present world goes astray, in you is the cause, in you let it be sought; and of this I will now be a true informant for thee.

[1] The soul of man is the direct creation of God, and is in immediate subjection to His power; it is not in charge of the Heavens, and its will is free to resist their mingled and imperfect influences.

"Forth from the hand of Him who delights in it ere it exist, like to a little maid who, weeping and smiling, wantons childishly, issues the simple little soul, which knows nothing, save that, proceeding from a glad Maker, it willingly turns to that which allures it. Of trivial good at first it tastes the savor; by this it is deceived and runs after it, if guide or bridle bend not its love. Wherefore it was needful to impose law as a bridle; needful to have a king who could discern at least the tower of the true city. The laws exist, but who set hand to them? Not one: because the shepherd who is in advance can ruminate, but has not his hoofs divided?[1] Wherefore the people, who see their guide only at that good[2] whereof they are greedy, feed upon that, and seek no further. Well canst thou see that the evil leading is the cause that has made the world guilty, and not nature which in you may be corrupted. Rome, which made the world good, was wont to have two Suns,[3] which made visible both one road and the other, that of the world and that of God. One has extinguished the other; and the sword is joined to the crozier; and the two together must of necessity go ill, because, being joined, one

feareth not the other. If thou believest rue not, consider the grain,[4] for every herb is known by its seed.

[1] The shepherd who precedes the flock, and should lead it aright, is the Pope. A mystical interpretation of the injunction upon the children of Israel (Leviticus, xi.) in regard to clean and unclean beasts was familiar to the schoolmen. St. Augustine expounds the cloven hoof as symbolic of right conduct, because it does not easily slip, and the chewing of the cud as signifying the meditation of wisdom. Dante seems here to mean that the Pope has the true doctrine, but makes not the true use of it for his own guidance and the government of the world.

[2] Material good.

[3] Pope and Emperor.

[4] The results that follow this forced union.

"Within the land which the Adige and the Po water, valor and courtesy were wont to be found before Frederick had his quarrel;[1] now safely anyone may pass there who out of shame would cease discoursing with the good, or drawing near them. Truly three old men are still there in whom the antique age rebukes the new, and it seems late to them ere God restore them to the better life; Currado da Palazzo, and the good Gherardo,[2] and Guido da Castel, who is better named, after the manner of the French, the simple Lombard.[3]

[1] Before the Emperor Frederick II. had his quarrel with the Pope; that is, before Emperor and Pope had failed in their respective duties to each other.

[2] Gherardo da Camino, "who was noble in his life, and whose memory will always be noble," says Dante in the Convito, iv. 14.

[3] "The French," says Benvenuto da Linda, "call all Italians Lombards, and repute them very astute."

"Say thou henceforth, that the Church of Rome, through confounding in itself two modes of rule,[1] falls in the mire, and defiles itself and its burden."

[1] The spiritual and the temporal.

"O Marco mine," said I, "thou reasonest well; and now I discern why the sons of Levi were excluded from the heritage;[1] but what Gherardo is that, who, thou sayest, remains for sample of the extinct folk, in reproach of the barbarous age?" "Either thy speech deceives me, or it is making trial of me," he replied to me, "in that, speaking Tuscan to me, it seems that of the good Gherardo thou knowest naught. By other added name I know him not, unless I should take it from his daughter Gaia.[2] May God be with you! for further I come not with you. Behold the brightness which rays already glimmering through the smoke, and it behoves me to depart — the Angel is there — ere I appear to him."[3] So he turned, and would not hear me more.

[1] "The Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance." — Deuteronomy, x. 8-9.

[2] Famed for her virtues, says Buti; for her vices, say the Ottimo and Benvenuto.

[3] His time of purgation is not yet finished; not yet is he ready to meet the Angel of the Pass.

CANTO XVII.

Third Ledge the Wrathful. — Issue from the Smoke. — Vision of examples of Anger. — Ascent to the Fourth Ledge, where Sloth is purged. — Second Nightfall. — Virgil explains how Love is the root of Virtue and of Sin.

Recall to mind, reader, if ever on the alps a cloud closed round thee, through which thou couldst not see otherwise than the mole through its skin, how, when the humid and dense vapors begin to dissipate, the ball of the sun enters feebly through them: and thy imagination will easily come to see, how at first I saw again the sun, which was already at its setting. So, matching mine to the trusty steps of my Master, I issued forth from such a cloud to rays already dead on the low shores.

O power imaginative, that dost sometimes so steal us from outward things that a man heeds it not, although around him a thousand trumpets sound, who moveth thee if the sense afford thee naught? A light, that in the heavens is formed, moveth thee by itself, or by a will that downward guides it?

[1] If the imagination is not stirred by some object of sense, it is moved by the influence of the stars, or directly by the Divine will.

In my imagination appeared the impress of the impiety of her[1] who changed her form into the bird that most delights in singing. And here was my mind so shut up within itself that from without came nothing which then might he received by it. Then rained down within my high fantasy, one crucified,[2] scornful and fierce in his look, and thus was dying. Around him were the great Ahasuerus, Esther his wife, and the just Mordecai, who was in speech and action so blameless. And when this imagination burst of itself, like a bubble for which the water fails, beneath which it was made, there rose in my vision a maiden,[3] weeping bitterly, and she was saying, “O queen, wherefore through anger hast thou willed to be naught? Thou hast killed thyself in order not to lose Lavinia: now thou hast lost me: I am she who mourns, mother, at thine, before another’s ruin.

[1] Progne or Philomela, according to one or the other version of the tragic myth, was changed into the nightingale, after her anger had led her to take cruel vengeance on Tereus.

[2] Haman, who, according to the English version, was hanged, but according to the Vulgate, was crucified — Esther, vii.

[3] Lavinia, whose mother, Amata, killed herself in a rage at hearing premature report of the death of Turnus, to whom she desired that Lavinia should be married. — Aeneid, xii. 595-607.

As sleep is broken, when of a sudden the new light strikes the closed eyes, and, broken, quivers ere it wholly dies, so my imagining fell down, soon as a light, greater by far than that to which we are accustomed, struck my face. I

turned me to see where I was, when a voice said, “Here is the ascent;” which from every other object of attention removed me, and made my will so eager to behold who it was that was, speaking that it never rests till it is face to face. But, as before the sun which weighs down our sight, and by excess veils its own shape, so here my power failed. “This is a divine spirit who directs us, without our asking, on the way to go up, and with his own light conceals himself. He does for us as a man doth for himself; for he who sees the need and waits for asking, malignly sets himself already to denial. Now let us grant our feet to such an invitation; let us hasten to ascend ere it grows dark, for after, it would not be possible until the day returns.” Thus said my Guide; and I and he turned our steps to a stairway. And soon as I was on the first step, near use I felt a motion as of wings, and a fanning on my face,[1] and I heard said, “Beati pacifici,’[2] who are without ill anger.”

[1] By which the angel removes the third P from Dante’s brow.

[2] “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

Now were the last sunbeams on which the night follows so lifted above us, that the stars were appearing on many sides. “O my virtue, why dost thou so melt away?” to myself I said, for I felt the power of my legs put in truce. We had come where the stair no farther ascends, and we were stayed fast even as a ship that arrives at the shore. And I listened a little, if I might hear anything in the new circle. Then I turned to my Master, and said, “My sweet Father, say what offence is purged here in the circle where we are: if the feet are stopped, let not thy discourse stop.” And he to me, “The love of good, less than it should have been, is here restored;[1] here is plied again the ill-slackened oar. But that thou mayst still more clearly understand, turn thy mind to me, and thou shalt gather some good fruit from our delay.

[1] It is the round on which the sin of acedie, sloth, is purged away.

“Neither Creator nor creature,” began he, “son, ever was without love, either natural, or of the mind,[1] and this thou knowest. The natural is always without error; but the other may err either through an evil object, or through too much or through too little vigor. While love is directed on the primal goods, and on the second moderates itself, it cannot be the cause of ill delight. But when it is bent to evil,[2] or runs to good with more zeal, or with less, than it ought, against the Creator works his own creature. Hence thou canst comprehend that love needs must be the seed in you of every virtue, and of every action that deserves punishment.

[1] Either native in the soul, as the love of God, or determined by the choice, through free will, of some object of desire in the mind.

[2] A wrong object of desire.

"Now since love can never bend its sight from the welfare of its subject,[1] all things are safe from hatred of themselves; and since no being can be conceived of divided from the First,[2] and standing by itself, from hating Him[3] every affection is cut off. It follows, if, distinguishing, I rightly judge, that the evil which is loved is that of one s neighbor; and in three modes is this love born within your clay. There is he who hopes to excel through the abasement of his neighbor, and only longs that from his greatness he may be brought low.[4] There is he who fears loss of power, favor, honor, fame, because another rises; whereat he is so saddened that he loves the opposite.[5] And there is he who seems so outraged by injury that it makes him gluttonous of vengeance, and such a one must needs coin evil for others.[6] This triform love is lamented down below.[7]

[1] To however wrong an object love may be directed, the person always believes it to be for his own good.

[2]The source of being.

[3] God, the First Cause.

[4] This is the nature of Pride.

[5] Envy.

[6] Anger.

[7] In the three lower rounds of Purgatory.

"Now I would that thou hear of the other, — that which runs to the good in faulty measure. Every one confusedly apprehends a good[1] in which the mind may be at rest, and which it desires; wherefore every one strives to attain it. If the love be slack that draws you to see this, or to acquire it, this cornice, after just repentance, torments you therefor. Another good there is,[2] which doth not make man happy, is not happiness, is not the good essence, the root of every good fruit. The love which abandons itself too much to this[3] is lamented above us in three circles, but how it is reckoned tripartite, I am silent, in order that thou seek it for thyself."

[1] The supreme Good.

[2] Sensual enjoyment.

[2] Resulting in the sins of avarice, gluttony, and lust.

CANTO XVIII.

Fourth Ledge The Slothful. — Discourse of Virgil on Love and Free Will. — Throng of Spirits running in haste to redeem their Sin. — The Abbot of San Zone. — Dante falls asleep.

The lofty Teacher had put an end to his discourse, and looked attentive on my face to see if I appeared content; and I, whom a fresh thirst already was goading, was silent outwardly, and within was saying, "Perhaps the too much questioning I make annoys him." But that true Father, who perceived the timid wish which did not disclose itself, by speaking gave me hardihood to speak. Then I, "My sight is so vivified in thy light that I discern clearly all that thy discourse may imply or declare: therefore I pray thee, sweet Father dear, that thou demonstrate to me the love to which thou referrest every good action and its contrary." "Direct," he said, "toward me the keen eyes of the understanding, and the error of the blind who make themselves leaders will be manifest to thee. The mind, which is created apt to love, is mobile unto everything that pleases, soon as by pleasure it is roused to action. Your faculty of apprehension draws an image from a real existence, and within you displays it, so that it makes the mind turn to it; and if, thus turned, the mind incline toward it, that inclination is love, that inclination is nature which is bound anew in you by pleasure.[1] Then, as the fire moveth upward by its own form,[2] which is born to ascend thither where it lasts longest in its material, so the captive mind enters into longing, which is a spiritual motion, and never rests until the thing beloved makes it rejoice. Now it may be apparent to thee, how far the truth is hidden from the people who aver that every love is in itself a laudable thing; because perchance its matter appears always to be good;[3] but not every seal is good although the wax be good."

[1] In his discourse in the preceding canto, Virgil has declared that neither the Creator nor his creatures are ever without love, either native in the soul, or proceeding from the mind. Here he explains how the mind is disposed to love by inclination to an image within itself of some object which gives it pleasure. This inclination is natural to it; or in his phrase, nature is bound anew in man by the pleasure which arouses the love. All this is a doctrine derived directly from St. Thomas Aquinas. "It is the property of every nature to have some inclination, which is a natural appetite, or love." — Summa Theol., 1, lxxvi. i.

[2] Form is here used in its scholastic meaning. " The active power of anything depends on its form, which is the principle of its action. Fur the form is either the nature itself of the thing, as in those which are pure form; or it is a constituent of the nature of the thing, as in those which are composed of matter and form." — Summa Theol., 3, xiii. i. Fire by its form, or nature, seeks the sphere of fire between the ether and the moon.

[3] The object may seem desirable to the mind, without being a fit object of desire.

"Thy words, and my understanding which follows," replied I to him, "have revealed love to me; but that has made me more full of doubt. For if love is offered to us from without, and if with other foot the soul go not, if strait or crooked she go is not her own merit."[1] And he to me, "So much as reason seeth

here can I tell thee; beyond that await still for Beatrice; for it is a work of faith. Every substantial form that is separate from matter, and is united with it,[2] has a specific virtue residing in itself which without action is not perceived, nor shows itself save by its effect, as by green leaves the life in a plant. Yet, whence the intelligence of the first cognitions comes man doth not know, nor whence the affection for the first objects of desire, which exist in you even as zeal in the bee for making honey: and this first will admits not desert of praise or blame. Now in order that to this every other may be gathered,[3] the virtue that counsels [4] is innate in you, and ought to keep the threshold of assent. This is the principle wherefrom is derived the reason of desert in you, according as it gathers in and winnows good and evil loves. Those who in reasoning went to the foundation took note of this innate liberty, wherefore they bequeathed morals[5] to the world. Assuming then that every love which is kindled within you arises of necessity, the power exists in you to restrain it. This noble virtue Beatrice calls the free will, and therefore see that thou have it in mind, if she take to speaking of it with thee."

[1] If love be aroused in the soul by an external object, and if it be natural to the soul to love, how does she deserve praise or blame for loving?

[2] The substantial form is the soul, which is separate from matter but united with it.

[3] In order that every other will may conform with the first, that is, with the affection natural to man for the primal objects of desire.

[4] The faculty of reason, the virtue which counsels and on which free will depends, is "the specific virtue" of the soul.

[5] The rules of that morality which would have no existence were it not for freedom of the will.

The moon, belated[1] almost to midnight, shaped[2] like a bucket that is all ablaze, was making the stars appear fewer to us, and was running counter to the heavens[3] along those paths which the sun inflames, when the man of Rome sees it between Sardinia and Corsica at its setting;[4] and that gentle shade, for whom Pietola[5] is more famed than the Mantuan city, had laid down the burden of my loading:[6] wherefore I, who had harvested his open and plain discourse upon my questions, was standing like a man who, drowsy, rambles. But this drowsiness was taken from me suddenly by folk, who, behind our backs, had now come round to us. And such as was the rage and throng, which of old Ismenus and Asopus saw at night along their banks, in case the Thebans were in need of Bacchus, so, according to what I saw of them as they came, those who by good will and right love are ridden curve their steps along that circle. Soon they were upon us; because, running, all that great crowd was moving on; and two in front, weeping, were crying out, "Mary ran with haste unto the mountain [7] and Caesar, to subdue Ilerda, thrust at Marseilles, and then ran on to Spain."[8] "Swift, swift, that time be not lost by little love," cried the others following, "for zeal in doing well may refreshen grace." "O people, in whom keen fervor now perhaps

redeems your negligence and delay, through lukewarmness, in well-doing, this one who is alive (and surely I lie not to you) wishes to go up, soon as the sun may shine again for us; therefore tell us where is the opening near." These words were of my Guide; and one of those spirits said: "Come thou behind us, and thou shalt find the gap. We are so filled with desire to move on that we cannot stay; therefore pardon, if thou holdest our obligation for churlishness. I was Abbot[9] of San Zeno at Verona, under the empire of the good Barbarossa, of whom Milan, still grieving, doth discourse. And he has one foot already in the grave,[10] who soon will lament on account of that monastery, and will be sorry for having had power there; because in place of its true shepherd he has put his son, ill in his whole body and worse in mind, and who was evil-born." I know not if more he said, or if he were silent, so far beyond us he had already run by; but this I heard, and to retain it pleased me.

[1] In its rising.

[2] Gibbous, like certain buckets still in use in Italy.

[3] "These words describe the daily backing of the moon through the signs from west to east." — Moore.

[4] These islands are invisible from Rome, but the line that runs from Rome between them is a little south of east.

[5] The modern name of Andes, the birthplace of Virgil, and therefore more famous than Mautua itself.

[6] With which I had laden him.

[7] Luke, i. 36.

[8] Examples of zeal.

[9] Unknown, save for this mention of him.

[10] Alberto della Scala, lord of Verona; he died in 1301. He had forced upon the monastery for its abbot his deformed and depraved illegitimate son.

And he who was at every need my succor said: "Turn thee this way; see two of them coming, giving a bite to sloth." In rear of all they were saying: "The people for whom the sea was opened were dead before their heirs beheld the Jordan;[1] and those who endured not the toil even to the end with the son of Anchises,[2] offered themselves to life without glory."

[1] Numbers, xiv. 28.

[2] But left him, to remain with Acestes in Sicily — Aeneid, v. 751.

Then when those shades were so far parted from us that they could no more be seen, a new thought set itself within me, from which many others and diverse were born; and I so strayed from one unto another that, thus wandering, I closed my eyes, and transmuted my meditation into dream.

CANTO XIX.

Fourth Ledge: the Slothful — Dante dreams of the Siren. — The Angel of the Pass. — Ascent to the Fifth Ledge. — Pope Adrian V.

At the hour when the diurnal heat, vanquished by the Earth or sometimes by Saturn,[1] can warm no more the coldness of the moon, — when the geomancers see their Greater Fortune[2] in the east, rising before the dawn along a path which short while stays dark for it, — there came to me in dream[3] a woman stammering, with eyes asquint, and crooked on her feet, with hands lopped off, and pallid in her color. I gazed at her; and as the sun comforts the cold limbs which the night bennmbs, so my look made her tongue nimble, and then set her wholly straight in little while, and so colored her wan face as love requires. Then, when she had her speech thus unloosed, she began to sing, so that with difficulty should I have turned my attention from her. "I am," she sang, "I am the sweet Siren, and the mariners in mid sea I bewitch, so full am I of pleasantness to hear. I turned Ulysses from his wandering way by my song; and whoso abides with me seldom departs, so wholly I content him."

[1] Toward dawn, when the warmth of the preceding day is exhausted, Saturn was supposed to exert a frigid influence.

[2] "Geomancy is divination by points in the ground, or pebbles arranged in certain figures, which have peculiar names. Among these is the figure called the Fortuna Major, which by an effort of imagination can also be formed out of some of the last stars of Aquarius and some of the first of Pisces." These are the signs that immediately precede Aries, in which the Sun now was, and the stars forming the figure of the Greater Fortune would be in the east about two hours before sunrise.

[3] The hour when this dream comes to Dante is "post mediam noctem … cum somnia vera," — the hour in which it was commonly believed that dreams have a true meaning. The woman seen by Dante is the deceitful Siren, who symbolizes the temptation to those sins of sense from which the spirits are purified in the three upper rounds of Purgatory.

Not yet was her mouth closed when at my side a Lady[1] appeared, holy, and ready to make her confused. "O Virgil, Virgil, who is this?" she sternly said; and he came with his eyes fixed only on that modest one. She took hold of the other, and in front she opened her, rending her garments, and showed me her belly; this waked me with the stench that issued from it. I turned my eyes, and the good Virgil said, "At least three calls have I given thee; arise and come; let us find the opening through which thou mayst enter."

[1] This lady seems to be the type of the conscience, virtus intellectualis, that calls reason to rescue the tempted soul.

Up I rose, and now were all the circles of the sacred mountain full of the high day, and we went on with the new sun at our backs. Following him, I bore my forehead like one who has it laden with thought, and makes of himself the half arch of a bridge, when I heard, "Come ye! here is the passage," spoken in a mode soft and benign, such as is not heard in this mortal region. With open

wings, which seemed of a swan, he who thus had spoken to us turned us upward between the two walls of the hard rock. He moved his feathers then, and fanned us, affirming qui lugent[1] to be blessed, for they shall have their souls mistresses of consolation.[2] “What ails thee that ever on the ground thou lookest?” my Guide began to say to me, both of us having mounted up a little from the Angel. “With such apprehension a recent vision makes me go, which bends me to itself so that I cannot from the thought withdraw me.” “Hast thou seen,” said he, “that ancient sorceress who above us henceforth is alone lamented? Hast thou seen how from her man is unbound? Let it suffice thee, and strike thy heels on the ground;[3] turn thine eyes to the lure that the eternal King whirls with the great circles.”

[1] “They that mourn.”

[2] The meaning seems to be, “they shall be possessed of comfort.” Donne (i.e.”mistresses) is a rhyme-word, and affords an instance of a straining of the meaning compelled by the rhyme.

[3] Hasten thy steps.

Like the falcon that first looks down, then turns at the cry, and stretches forward, through desire of the food that draws him thither; such I became, and such, so far as the rock is cleft to afford a way to him who goeth up, did I go on as far as where the circling[1] is begun. When I was come forth on the fifth round, I saw people upon it who were weeping, lying upon the earth all turned downward. “Adhoesit pavimento anima mea,”[2] I heard them saying with such deep sighs that the words were hardly understood. “O elect of God, whose sufferings both justice and hope make less hard, direct us toward the high ascents.” “If ye come secure from the lying down, and wish to find the speediest way, let your right hands always be outside.” So prayed the Poet, and so a little in front was replied to us by them; wherefore I, in his speaking, marked the hidden one;[3] and then turned my eyes to my Lord, whereon he granted me, with cheerful sign, that which the look of my desire was asking for. Then when I could do with myself according to my will, I drew me above that creature whose words had first made me note him, saying, “Spirit in whom weeping matures that without which no one can turn to God, suspend a little for me thy greater care. Tell me who thou wast; and why ye have your backs turned upward; and if thou wishest that I obtain aught for thee there whence I alive set forth.” And he to me, “Thy heaven turns to itself our hinder parts thou shalt know; but first, scias quod ego fui successor Petri.[4] Between Sestri and Chiaveri[5] descends a beautiful stream,[6] and of its name the title of my race makes its top.[7] One month and little more I proved how the great mantle weighs on him who guards it from the mire, so that all other burdens seem a feather. My conversion, ah me! was tardy; but when I had become the Roman Shepherd, then I found out the lying

life. I saw that there the heart was not at rest; nor was it possible to, mount higher in that life; wherefore the love of this was kindled in me. Up to that time a wretched soul and parted from God had I been, avaricious of everything; now, as thou seest, I am punished for it here. That which avarice doth is displayed here in the purgation of these converted souls, and the Mountain has no more bitter penalty.[8] Even as our eye, fixed upon earthly things, was not lifted on high, so justice here to earth has depressed it. As avarice, in which labor is lost, quenched our love for every good, so justice here holds us close, bound and captive in feet and hands; and, so long as it shall be the pleasure of the just Lord, so long shall we stay immovable and outstretched."

[1] The level of the fifth round.

[2] "My soul cleaveth to the dust." — Psalm cxix. 25.

[3] The face of the speaker, turned to the ground, was concealed.

[4] "Know that I was a successor of Peter." This was the Pope Adrian V., Ottobono de' Fieschi, who died in 1276, having been Pope for thirty-eight days.

[5] Little towns on the Genoese sea-coast.

[6] The Lavagna, from which stream the Fieschi derived their title of Counts of Lavagna.

[7] Its chief boast.

[8] Others may be greater, but none more humiliating.

I had knelt down and wished to speak; but when I began, and he became aware, only by listening, of my reverence, "What cause," said he, "hath bent thee thus downward?" And I to him, "Because of your dignity my conscience stung me for standing." "Straighten thy legs, and lift thee up, brother," he replied; "err not, fellow servant of one power am I with thee and with the rest.[1] If ever thou hast understood that holy gospel sound which says neque nubent,[2] thou mayst well see why I speak thus. Now go thy way. I will not that thou longer stop; for thy stay hinders my weeping, with which I ripen that which thou hast said. A grandchild I have on earth who is named Alagia,[3] good in herself, if only our house make her not wicked by example; and she alone remains to me yonder."[4]

[1] And I fell at His feet to worship him. And He said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant." — Revelation xix. 10.

[2] They neither marry." — Matthew, xxii. 80. The distinctions of earths do not exist in the spiritual world.

[3] Alagia was the wife of the Marquis Moroello Malaspina. See the close of Canto VIII. Dante had probably seen her in 1306, when he was a guest of the house, in the Lunigiana.

[4] Not that she was his only living relative, but the only one whose prayers, coming from a good heart, would avail him.

CANTO XX.

Fifth Ledge: the Avaricious. — The Spirits celebrate examples of Poverty and Bounty. — Hugh Capet. — His discourse on his descendants. — Trembling of the Mountain.

Against a better will the will fights ill: wherefore against my own pleasure, in order to please him, I drew from the water the sponge not full.

I moved on, and my Leader moved on through the space vacant only alongside of the rock, as upon a wall one goes close to the battlements. For on the other side the people, that through their eyes are pouring drop by drop the evil that possesses all the world, approach too near the edge.[1]

[1]Too close to leave a space for walking.

Accursed be thou, old she-wolf, who more than all the other beasts hast prey, because of thy hunger hollow without end! O Heaven! by whose revolution it seems that men believe conditions here below are transmuted, when will he come through whom she shall depart?[1] We were going on with slow and scanty steps, and I attentive to the shades whom I heard piteously lamenting and bewailing; and peradventure I heard in front of us one crying out, “Sweet Mary,” in his lament, even as a woman does who is in travail; and continuing, “So poor wast thou as may be seen by that inn where thou didst lay down thy holy burden.” And following this I heard, “O good Fabricius,[2] thou didst rather wish for virtue with poverty than to possess great riches with vice.” These words were so pleasing to me that I drew myself further on to have acquaintance with that spirit from whom they seemed to come. He was speaking furthermore of the largess which Nicholas[3] made to the damsels in order to conduct their youth to honor. “O soul that discoursest so well,” said I, “tell me who thou wast, and why thou alone renewest these worthy praises. Not without meed will be thy words, if I return to complete the short journey of that life which flies towards its end.” And he, “I will tell thee, not for comfort that I may expect from yonder,[4] but because such grace shineth on thee ere thou art dead. I was the root of the evil plant which so overshadows all the Christian land[5] that good fruit is rarely plucked therefrom. But if Douai, Lille, Ghent, and Bruges had power, soon would there be vengeance on it;[6] and I implore it from him who judges everything. Yonder I was called Hugh Capet: of me are born the Philips and the Louises, by whom of late times France is ruled. I was the son of a butcher of Paris.[7] When the ancient kings had all died out, save one, who had assumed the grey garb,[8] I found me with the bridle of the government of the realm fast in my hands, and with so much power recently acquired, and so full of friends, that to

the widowed crown the head of my son was promoted, from whom the consecrated bones[9] of these began.

[1] The old she-wolf is avarice, the same who at the outset (Hell, Canto I.) had driven Dante back and made him lose hope of the height. The likeness of the two passages is striking.

[2] Caius Fabricius, the famous poor and incorruptible Roman consul, who refused the bribes of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus. Dante extols his worth also in the Convito, iv. 5.

[3] St. Nicholas, Bishop of Mira, who, according to the legend, knowing that owing to the poverty of their father, three maidens were exposed to the risk of leading lives of dishonor, secretly, at night, threw into the window of their house money enough to provide each with a dowry.

[4] The earth.

[5] In 1300 the descendants of Hugh Capet were ruling France, Spain, and Naples.

[6] Phillip the Fair gained possession of Flanders, by force and fraud, in 1299; but in 1802 the French were driven out of the country, after a fatal defeat at Courtrai, here dimly prophesied.

[7] Dante here follows the incorrect popular tradition.

[8] Who had become a monk. The historical reference is obscure.

[9] An ironical reference to the ceremony of consecration at the coronation of the kings.

"So long as the great dowry of Provence[1] took not the sense of shame from my race, it was little worth, but still it did not ill. Then it began its rapine with force and with falsehood; and, after, for amends,[2] Ponthieu and Normandy it took, and Gascony; Charles[3] came to Italy, and, for amends, made a victim of Conradin,[4] and then thrust Thomas[5] back to heaven for amends. A time I see, not long after this day, that draws forth another Charles[6] from France to make both himself and his the better known. Without arms he goes forth thence alone, but with the lance with which Judas jousted;[7] and that he thrusts so that he makes the paunch of Florence burst. Therefrom he will gain not land,[8] but sin and shame so much the heavier for himself, as he the lighter reckons such harm. The other,[9] who has already gone out a prisoner from his ship, I see selling his daughter, and bargaining over her, as do the corsairs with other female slaves. O Avarice, what more canst thou do with us, since thou hast so drawn my race unto thyself that it cares not for its own flesh? In order that the ill to come and that already done may seem the less, I see the fleur-de-lis entering Anagna, and in his Vicar Christ made a captive.[10] I see him being mocked a second time; I see the vinegar and the gall renewed, and between living thieves him put to death. I see the new Pilate so cruel that this does not sate him, but, without decretal, he bears his covetous sails into the Temple.[11] O my Lord, when shall I be glad in seeing thy vengeance which, concealed, makes sweet thine anger in thy secrecy?

[1] Through the marriage in 1245 of Charles of Anjou, brother of St. Louis (Louis IX.), with Beatrice, the heiress of the Count of Provence.

[2] The bitterness of Dante's irony is explained by the part which France had played in Italian affairs.

[3] Of Anjou.

[4] The youthful grandson of Frederick II., who, striving to wrest Naples and Sicily, his hereditary possessions, from the hands of Charles of Anjou, was defeated and taken prisoner by him in 1267, and put to deaths by him in 1268. His fate excited great compassion.

[5] Charles was believed to have had St. Thomas Aquinas poisoned.

[6] Charles of Valois, brother of Philip the Fair, sent by Boniface VIII., in 1301, to Florence as peacemaker. But there he wrought great harm, and siding with the Black party, the Whites, including Dante, were driven into exile.

[7] The lance of treachery.

[8] A reference to his nickname of Senza terra, or Lackland.

[9] Charles II., son of Charles of Anjou. In 1283 he was made captive in a sea fight, by Ruggieri de Loria, the Admiral of Peter II. of Aragon. In 1300, according to common report, he sold his young daughter in marriage to the old Marquis of Este.

[10] Spite of his hostility to Boniface VIII., the worst crime of the house of France was, in Dante's eyes, the seizure of the Pope at Anagni, in 1303, by the emissaries of Philip the Fair.

[11] The destruction of the Order of the Temple.

"What I was saying of that only bride of the Holy Spirit, and which made thee turn toward me for some gloss, is ordained for all our prayers so long as the day lasts, but when the night comes, we take up a contrary sound instead. Then we rehearse Pygmalion,[1] whom his gluttonous longing for gold made a traitor and thief and parricide; and the wretchedness of the avaricious Midas which followed on his greedy demand, at which men must always laugh. Then of the foolish Achan each one recalls how he stole the spoils, so that the anger of Joshua seems still to sting him, here.[2] Then we accuse Sapphira with her husband; we praise the kicks that Heliodorus received,[3] and in infamy Polymnestor who slew Polydorus[4] circles the Whole mountain. Finally our cry here is, 'Crassus, tell us, for thou knowest, what is the taste of gold?'[5] At times one speaks loud, and another low, according to the affection which spurs us to speak now at a greater, now at a less pace. Therefore in the good which by day is here discoursed of, of late I was not alone, but here near by no other person lifted up his voice."

[1] The brother of Dido, and the murderer of her husband for the sake of his riches — Aeneid, i. 353-4.

[2] Joshua, vii.

[3] For his attempt to plunder the treasury of the Temple. — 2 Maccabees, iii. 25.

[4] Priam had entrusted Polydorus, his youngest son, to Polymnestor, King of Thrace, who, when the fortunes of Troy declined, slew Polydorus, that he might take possession of the treasure sent with him.

[5] Having been slain in battle with the Parthians, their king poured molten gold down his throat in derision, because of his fame as the richest of men.

We had already parted from him, and were striving to advance along the road so far as was permitted to our power, when I felt the Mountain tremble, like a thing that is falling; whereupon a chill seized me such as is wont to seize him who goes to death. Surely Delos shook not so violently, before Latona made her nest therein to give birth to the two eyes of heaven.[1] Then began on all sides such a cry that the Master drew towards me, saying: “Distrust not, while I guide thee.” “Gloria in excelsis Deo,”[2] all were saying, according to what I gathered from those near at hand whose cry it was possible to understand. We stopped, motionless and in suspense, like the shepherds who first heard that song, until the trembling ceased, and it was ended. Then we took up again our holy journey, looking at the shades that were lying on the ground, returned already to their wonted plaint. No ignorance ever with so sharp attack made me desirous of knowing — if my memory err not in this — as it seemed to me I then experienced in thought. Nor, for our haste, did I dare to ask, nor of myself could I see aught there. So I went on timid and thoughtful.

[1] Apollo and Diana, the divinities of Sun and Moon.

[2] “Glory to God in the highest.”

CANTO XXI.

Fifth Ledge: the Avaricious. — Statius. — Cause of the trembling of the Mountain. — Statius does honor to Virgil.

The natural thirst,[1] which is never satisfied save with the water[2] whereof the poor woman of Samaria besought the grace, was tormenting me, and haste was goading me along the encumbered way behind my Leader, and I was grieving at the just vengeance; and lo, — as Luke writes for us that Christ, now risen forth from the sepulchral cave, appeared to the two who were on the way, — a shade appeared to us; and it was coming behind us looking at the crowd that lay at its feet: nor did we perceive it, so it spoke first saying, "My Brothers, may God give you peace!" We turned suddenly, and Virgil gave back to it the greeting which answers to that;[3] then he began: "In the assembly of the blest may the true court, which relegates me into eternal exile, place thee in peace." "How," said it, — and meanwhile we went on steadily,— "if ye are shades that God deigns not on high, who hath guided you so far along his stairs?" And my Teacher, "If thou regardest the marks which this one bears, and which the Angel traces, thou wilt clearly see it behoves that with the good he reign. But, because she who spinneth day and night[4] had not for him yet drawn the distaff off, which Clotho loads for each one and compacts, his soul, which is thy sister and mine, coming upwards could not come alone, because it sees not after our fashion. Wherefore I was drawn from out the ample throat of Hell to show him, and I shall show him so far on as my teaching can lead him. But tell us, if thou knowest, why just now the mountain gave such shocks, and why all seemed to cry together, even down to its moist feet." Thus asking he shot for me through the needle's eye of my desire, so that only with the hope my thirst became less craving.

[1] "According to that buoyant and immortal sentence with which Aristotle begins his Metaphysics, 'All mankind naturally desire knowledge.'" Matthew Arnold, God and the Bible, cli. iv. This sentence of Aristotle is cited by Dante in the first chapter of the Convito.

[2] The living water of truth.

[3] To the salutation, "Peace be with you," the due answer is, "And with thy spirit."

[4] Lachesis.

The shade began: "There is nothing which without order the religion of the mountain can feel, or which can be outside its wont.[1] Free is this place from every alteration; of that which heaven receives from itself within itself there may be effect here, but of naught else;[2] because nor rain, nor hail, nor snow, nor dew, nor frost, falls higher up than the little stairway of the three short steps; clouds

appear not, or thick or thin; nor lightning, nor the daughter of Thaumas[3] who yonder often changes her quarter; dry vapor[4] rises not farther up than the top of the three steps of which I spoke, where the vicar of Peter has his feet. It trembles perhaps lower down little or much; but up here it never trembles because of wind that is hidden, I know not how, in the earth. It trembles here when some soul feels itself pure, so that it rises or moves to ascend; and such a cry seconds it. Of the purity the will alone makes proof, which surprises the soul, wholly free to change its company, and helps it with the will. The soul wills at first indeed, but the inclination, — which, contrary to the will, Divine Justice sets to the torment, as erst to the sin, — allows it not.[5] And I who have lain in this pain five hundred years and more, only just now felt a free volition for a better seat. Wherefore thou didst feel the earthquake, and hear the pious spirits through the Mountain giving praise to that Lord, who — may He speed them upward soon!"

[1] The religion, the sacred rule, of the Mountain admits nothing that is not ordained and customary.

[2] Whatever happens here is occasioned only by the direct influences of the heavens.

[3] Iris = the rainbow, seen now to the west, now to the east.

[4] Dry vapor, according to Aristotle, was the source of wind and of earthquake.

[5] Until the soul is wholly purified from its sinful disposition,it desires the punishment through; which its purification is accomplished, as it had originally desired the object of its sin. But when it becomes pure, then the will possesses it to mount to Heaven, and becomes effective.

Thus he said to us, and since one enjoys drinking in proportion as the thirst is great, I could not say how much he did me good. And the sage Leader, "Now I see the net which snares you here, and how it is unmeshed; wherefore it trembles here; and for what ye rejoice together. Now who thou wast may it please thee that I know, and that from thy words I learn why for so many centuries thou hast lain here?" "At the time when the good Titus, with the aid of the Most High King, avenged the wounds wherefrom issued the blood sold by Judas, I was fatuous enough on earth with the name which lasts longest, and honors most,"[1] replied that spirit, "but not as yet with faith. So sweet was my vocal spirit, that me of Toulouse Rome drew to itself, where I deserved to adorn my temples with myrtle. Statius the people still on earth name me. I sang of Thebes, and then of the great Achilles, but I fell on the way with my second load.[2] Seed of my ardor were the sparks that warmed me of the divine flame whereby more than a thousand have been kindled; I speak of the Aeneid, which was mother to me, and was my nurse in poesy: without it I balanced not the weight of a drachm; and to have lived yonder, when Virgil lived, I would agree to one sun more than I owe for my issue from ban."[3]

[1] The name of Poet.

[2] Statius died before completing his Achilleid.

[3] A year more in Purgatory than is due for my punishment.

These words turned Virgil to me with a look which, silent, said, “Be silent:” but the power that wills cannot do everything; for smiles and tears are such followers on the emotion from which each springs, that in the most truthful they least follow the will. I merely smiled, like a man who makes a sign; whereat the shade became silent, and looked at me in the eyes where the expression is most fixed. And it said, “So mayst thou in good complete so great a labor, why aid thy face just now display to me a flash of a smile?” Now am I caught on one side and the other: one bids me be silent, the other conjures me to speak; wherefore I sigh and am understood by my Master, and “Have no fear to speak,” he said to me, “but speak, and tell him what he asks so earnestly.” Whereon I, “Perhaps thou marvellest, ancient spirit, at the smile I gave; but I would have more wonder seize thee. This one who guides my eyes on high is that Virgil from whom thou didst derive the strength to sing of men and of the gods. If thou didst believe other cause for my smile, dismiss it as untrue, and believe it to be those words which thou saidst of him.” Already he was stooping to embrace the feet of my Leader, but he said to him, “Brother, do it not, for thou art a shade, and thou seest a shade.” And he rising, “Now canst thou comprehend the sum of the love that warms me to thee when I forget our vanity, treating the shades as if a solid thing.”[1]

[1] Sordello and Virgil (Canto VI.) embraced each other. The shades could thus express their mutual affection. Perhaps it is out of modesty that Virgil here represses Statius, and possibly there may be the under meaning that an act of reverence is not becoming from a soul redeemed, to one banned in eternal exile.

CANTO XXII.

Ascent to the Sixth Ledge. — Discourse of Statius and Virgil. — Entrance to the Ledge: the Gluttonous. — The Mystic Tree. — Examples of Temperance.

Already was the Angel left behind us, — the Angel who had turned us to the sixth round, — having erased a stroke[1] from my face; and he had said to us that those who have their desire set on justice are Beati, and his words ended with sitiunt, without the rest.[2] And I, more light than through the other passes, was going on so that without any labor I was following upward the swift spirits, when Virgil began, "Love kindled by virtue always kindles another, provided that its flame appear outwardly; wherefore from the hour when amid us Juvenal descended into the limbo of Hell, and made known to me thy affection, my own good will toward thee was such that more never bound one to an unseen person; so that these stairs will now seem short to me. But tell me (and as a friend pardon me, if too great confidence let loose my rein, and as a friend now talk with me) boxy avarice could find a place within thy breast, amid wisdom so great as that wherewith through thy diligence thou wast filled?"

[1] The fifth P.

[2] The Angel had not recited all the words of the Beatitude, but only, "Blessed are they which do thirst after righteousness," contrasting this thirst with the thirst for riches.

These words first moved Statius a little to smiling; then he replied, "Every word of thine is a dear sign to me of love. Truly oftentimes things have such appearance that they give false material for suspicion, because the true reasons lie hid. Thy question assures me of thy belief, perhaps because of that circle where I was, that I was avaricious in the other life; know then that avarice was too far removed from me, and this want of measure thousands of courses of the moon have punished. And had it not been that I set right my care, when I understood the passage where thou dost exclaim, as if indignant with human nature, "O cursed hunger of gold, to what dost thou not impel the appetite of mortals?"[1] I, rolling, should share the dismal jousts.[2] Then I perceived that the bands could spread their wings too much in spending; and I repented as well of that as of my other sins. How many shall rise with cropped hair[3] through ignorance, which during life and in the last hours prevents repentance for this sin! And know, that the vice which rebuts any sin with direct opposition,[4] together with it here dries up its verdure. Wherefore if to purify myself I have been among the people who lament their avarice, because of its contrary this has befallen me." "Now when thou wast singing[5]the cruel strife of the twofold

affliction[6] of Jocasta," said the Singer of the Bucolic songs, "it does not appear from that which Clio touches[7] with thee there,[8] that the faith, without which good works suffice not, had yet made thee faithful. If this be so, what sun, or what candles dispersed thy darkness so that thou didst thereafter set thy sails behind the Fisherman?"[9] And he to him, "Thou first directedst me toward Parnassus to drink in its grots, and then, on the way to God, thou enlightenedst me. Thou didst like him, who goes by night, and carries the light behind him, and helps not himself, but makes the persons following him wise, when thou saidst, 'The ages are renewed; Justice returns, and the primeval time of man, and a new progeny descends from heaven.'[10] Through thee I became a poet, through thee a Christian. But in order that thou mayst better see that which I sketch, I will stretch out my hand to color it. Already was the whole world teeming with the true belief, sown by the messengers of the eternal realm; and these words of thine touched upon just now were in harmony with the new preachers, wherefore I adopted the practice of visiting them. They came to me then appearing so holy, that, when Domitian persecuted them, not without my tears were their lamentings. And so long as I remained on earth I succored them; and their upright customs made me scorn all other sects. And before I had led the Greeks to the rivers of Thebes in my verse, I received baptism; but out of fear I was a secret Christian, for a long while making show of paganism: and this lukewarmness made me circle round the fourth circle,[11] longer than to the fourth century. Thou, therefore, that didst lift for me the covering that was hiding from me such great good as I say, while we have remainder of ascent, tell me where is our ancient Terence, Caecilius, Plautus, and Varro, if thou knowest it; tell me if they are damned, and in what region?" "They, and Persius, and I, and many others," replied my Leader, "are with that Greek whom the Muses suckled more than any other ever, in the first girdle of the blind prison. Oftentimes we discourse of the mountain[12] that hath our nurses[13] always with itself. Euripides is there with us, and Antiphon, Simonides, Agathon, and many other Greeks who of old adorned their brows with laurel. There of thine own people[14] are seen Antigone, Deiphile, and Argia, and Ismene sad[15] even as she was. There she is seen who showed Langia;[16] there is the daughter of Tiresias and Thetis,[17] and Deidamia with her sisters."

[1] Quid non mortalia peetora yogis,
Auri sacra fames?
Aeneid. iii. 56-57.

[2] I should be in Hell among the prodigals rolling heavy weights and striking them against those rolled by the avaricious. See Hell, Canto VII.

[3] A reference to the symbolic short hair of prodigals in Hell.

[4] As, for instance, avarice and prodigality.

[5] In the Thebaid.

[6] Eteocles and Polynices, the two sons of Jocasta. See Hell, Canto XXVI.

[7] On her lyre.

[8] From the general course of thy poems.

[9] St. Peter.

[10] The famous prophecy of the Cumaean Sibyl, very early applied to the coming of Christ: — Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo. Jam redit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna: Jam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto. — Ecloga, iv. 5-7.

[11] Where love too slack is punished.

[12] Parnassus.

[13] The Muses.

[14] The people celebrated in thy poems.

[15] Two pairs of sisters, and, of the four, Ismene, sister of Antigone, had the hardest lot.

[16] Hypsipyle, who showed the fountain Langia to Adrastus, and the other kings, when their army was perishing with thirst.

[17] Manto is the only daughter of Tiresias, who is mentioned by Statius; but Manto is in the eighth circle in Hell. See Canto XX.

Now both the poets became silent, once more intent on looking around, free from the ascent and from the walls; and four of the handmaids of the day were now remaining behind,[1] and the fifth was at the pole,[2] directing still upward its burning horn, when my Leader, “I think that it behoves us to turn our right shoulders to the outer edge, circling the Mount as we are wont to do.” Thus usage was there our guide, and we took the way with less doubt because of the assent of that worthy soul.

[1] The first four hours of the day were spent. It was between ten and eleven o’clock.

[2] Of the car.

They were going on in front, and I solitary behind, and I was listening to their speech which gave me understanding in poesy. But soon the pleasant discourse was interrupted by a tree which we found in the mid road, with apples sweet and pleasant to the smell. And as a fir-tree tapers upward from branch to branch, so downwardly did that, I think in order that no one may go up. On the side on which our way was closed, a clear water fell from the high rock and spread itself over the heaves above. The two poets approached the tree, and a voice from within the heaves cried: “Of this food ye shall have want.” Then it said, “Mary thought more, how the wedding[1] should be honorable and complete, than of her mouth,[2] which answers now for you; and the ancient Roman women were content with water for their drink; and Daniel despised food and gained wisdom.

The primal age, which was beautiful as gold, with hunger made acorns savory, and with thirst every streamlet nectar. Honey and locusts were the viands that nourished the Baptist in the desert, wherefore he is in glory, and so great as by the Gospel is revealed to you.

[1] At Cana.

[2] Than of gratifying her appetite.

CANTO XXIII.

Sixth Ledge: the Gluttonous. — Forese Donati. — Nella. — Rebuke of the women of Florence.

While I was fixing my eyes upon the green leafage, just as he who wastes his life following the little bird is wont to do, my more than Father said to me, “Son, come on now, for the time that is assigned to us must be parcelled out more usefully.” I turned my face, and no less quickly my step after the Sages, who were speaking so that they made the going of no cost to me; and ho! a lament and song were heard, “Labia mea, Domine,”[1] in such fashion that it gave birth to delight and pain. “O sweet Father, what is that which I hear?” I began, and he, “Shades which go, perhaps loosing the knot of their debt.”

[1] “Lord, open thou my lips.” — Psalm li. 15.

Even as do pilgrims rapt in thought, who, overtaking on the road unknown folk, turn themselves to them, and stay not; so behind us, moving more quickly, coming up and passing by, a crowd of souls, silent and devout, gazed at us. Each was dark and hollow in the eyes, pallid in the face, and so wasted that the skin took its shape from the bones. I do not think that Erisichthon[1] was so dried up to utter rind by hunger, when he had most fear of it. I said to myself in thought, “Behold the people who lost Jerusalem, when Mary struck her beak into her son.”[2] The sockets of their eyes seemed rings without gems. Whoso in the face of men reads OMO,[3] would surely there have recognized the M. Who would believe that the scent of an apple, begetting longing, and that of a water, could have such mastery, if he knew not how?

[1] Punished for sacrilege by Ceres with insatiable hunger, so that at last he turned his teeth upon himself. See Ovid, Metam.,viii. 738 sqq.

[2] The story of this wretched woman is told by Josephus in his narrative of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus: De Bello Jud., vi. 3.

[3] Finding in each eye an O, and an M in the lines of the brows and nose, making the word for “man.”

I was now wondering what so famished them, the cause of their meagreness and of their wretched husk not yet being manifest, and lo! from the depths of its head, a shade turned his eyes on me, and looked fixedly, then cried out loudly, “What grace to me is this!” Never should I have recognized him by his face; but in his voice that was disclosed to me which his aspect in itself had suppressed.[1] This spark rekindled in me all my knowledge of the altered visage, and I recognized the face of Forese.[2]

[1] His voice revealed who he was, which his actual aspect concealed.

[2] Brother of the famous Corso Donati, and related to Dante, whose wife was Gemma de' Donati.

"Ah, strive not [1] with the dry scab that discolors my skin," he prayed, "nor with my lack of flesh, but tell me the truth about thyself; and who are these two souls, who yonder make an escort for thee: stay not thou from speaking to me." "Thy face, which once I wept for dead, now gives me for weeping no less a grief," replied I, "seeing it so disfigured; therefore, tell me, for God's sake, what so despoils you; make me not speak while I am marvelling; for ill can he speak who is full of another wish." And he to me, "From the eternal council falls a power into the water and into the plant, now left behind, whereby I become so thin. All this folk who sing weeping, because of following their appetite beyond measure, here in hunger and in thirst make themselves holy again. The odour which issues from the apple and from the spray that spreads over the verdure kindles in us desire to eat and drink. And not once only as we circle this floor is our pain renewed; I say pain, and ought to say solace, for that will leads us to the tree which led Christ gladly to say, 'Eli,'[2] when with his blood he delivered us." And I to him, "Forese, from that day on which thou didst change world to a better life, up to this time five years have not rolled round. If the power of sinning further had ended in thee, ere the hour supervened of the good grief that to God reweds us, how hast thou come up hither?[3] I thought to find thee still down there below, where time is made good by time." And he to me, "My Nella with her bursting tears has brought me thus quickly to drink of the sweet wormwood of these torments. With her devout prayers and with sighs has she drawn me from the shore where one waits, and has delivered me from the other circles. So much the more dear and more beloved of God is my little widow, whom I loved so much, as she is the more solitary in good works; for the Barbagia[4] of Sardinia is far more modest in its women than the Barbagia where I left her. O sweet brother, what wouldst thou that I say? A future time is already in my sight, to which this hour will not be very old, in which from the pulpit it shall be forbidden to the brazen-faced dames of Florence to go displaying the bosom with the paps. What Barbarian, what Saracen women were there ever who required either spiritual or other discipline to make them go covered? But if the shameless ones were aware of that which the swift heaven is preparing for them, already would they have their mouths open for howling. For if foresight here deceives me not, they will be sad ere he who is now consoled with the lullaby covers his cheeks with hair. Ak brother, now no longer conceal thyself from me; thou seest that not only I but all these people are gazing there where thou dost veil the sun." Whereon I to him: "If thou bring back to mind what thou wast with me, and what I was with thee, the present remembrance will even now

be grievous. From that life he who goes before me turned me the other day, when the sister of him yonder," and I pointed to the sun, "showed herself round. Through the deep night, from the truly dead, he has led me, with this true flesh which follows him. Thence his counsels have drawn me up, ascending and circling the mountain that sets you straight whom the world made crooked. So long he says that he will bear me company till I shall be there where Beatrice will be; there it behoves that I remain without him. Virgil is he who says thus to me," and I pointed to him, "and this other is that shade for whom just now your realm, which from itself releases him, shook every slope."

[1] Do not, for striving to see me through my changed look, delay to speak.

[2] Willingly to accept his suffering, even when he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" — Matthew, xxvii. 46.

[3] If thou didst delay repentance until thou couldst sin no more, how is it that so speedily thou hast arrived here?

[4] A mountainous district in Sardinia, inhabited by people of barbarous customs.

CANTO XXIV.

Sixth Ledge: the Gluttonous. — Forese Donati. — Bonagiunta of Lucca — Pope Martin IV — Ubaldin dalla Pila. — Bonifazio. — Messer Marchese. — Prophecy of Bonagiunta concerning Gentucca, and of Forese concerning Corso de' Donati. — Second Mystic Tree. — The Angel of the Pass.

Speech made not the going, nor the going made that more slow; but, talking, we went on apace even as a ship urged by good wind. And the shades, that seemed things doubly dead, through the pits of their eyes drew in wonder at me, perceiving that I was alive.

And I, continuing my discourse, said, "He[1] goeth up perchance for another's sake more slowly than he would do. But, tell me, if thou knowest, where is Piccarda[2] tell me if I see person of note among this folk that so gazes at me." "My sister, who, between fair and good, was I know not which the most, triumphs rejoicing in her crown already on high Olympus." So he said first, and then, "Here it is not forbidden to name each other, since our semblance is so milked away by the diet.[3] This," and he pointed with his finger, "is Bonagiunta,[4] Bonagiunta of Lucca; and that face beyond him, more sharpened than the others, had the Holy Church in his arms:[5]from Tours he was; and by fasting he purges the eels of Bolsena, and the Vernaccia wine." Many others he named to me, one by one, and at their naming all appeared content; so that for this I saw not one dark mien. For hunger using their teeth on emptiness, I saw Ubaldin dalla Pila, and Boniface,[6] who shepherded many people with his crook. I saw Messer Marchese, who once had leisure to drink at Forum with less thirst, and even so was such that he felt not sated. But as one does who looks, and then makes account more of one than of another, did I of him of Lucca, who seemed to have most cognizance of me. He was murmuring; and I know not what, save that I heard "Gentucca" there[7] where he felt the chastisement of the justice which so strips them. "O soul," said I, "who seemest so desirous to speak with me, do so that I may hear thee, and satisfy both thyself and me by thy speech." "A woman is born, and wears not yet the veil,"[8] he began, "who will make my city pleasant to thee, however men may blame it.[9] Thou shalt go on with this prevision: if from my murmuring thou hast received error, the true things will yet clear it up for thee. But say, if I here see him, who drew forth the new rhymes, beginning, 'Ladies who have intelligence of Love'?"[10] And I to him, "I am one, who, when Love inspires me, notes, and in that measure which he dictates within, I go revealing." "O brother, now I see," said he, "the knot which held back the Notary,[11] and Guittone,[12] and me short of the sweet new style that I hear. I see clearly how your pens go on close following the dictator, which surely befell not

with ours. And he who most sets himself to look further sees nothing more between one style and the other." [13] And, as if contented, he was silent.

[1]Statius; more slowly, for the sake of remaining with Virgil.

[2] The sister of Forese, whom Dante meets in Paradise (Canto III.).

[3] Recognition by the looks being thus impossible.

[4] Bonagiunta Urbiciani; he lived and wrote in the last half of the thirteenth century.

[5] Martin IV., Pope from 1281 to 1284.

[6] Archbishop of Ravenna.

[7] Upon his lips.

[8] Of a married woman.

[9] This honorable and delightful reference to the otherwise unknown maiden, Gentucca of Lucca, has given occasion to much worthless and base comment. Dante was at Lucca during his exile, in 1314. He himself was one of those who blamed the city; see Hell, Canto XXI.

[10] The first verse of the first canzone of The New Life.

[11] The Sicilian poet, Jacopo da Lentino.

[12] Guittone d' Arezzo, commonly called Fra Guittone, as one of the order of the Frati Gaudenti. Dante refers to him again in Canto XXVI.

[13] He who seeks for other reason does not find it.

As the birds that winter along the Nile sometimes make a flock in the air, then fly in greater haste, and go in file, so all the folk that were there, light both through leanness and through will, turning away their faces, quickened again their pace. And as the man who is weary of running lets his companions go on, and himself walks, until he vents the panting of his chest, so Forese let the holy flock pass on and came along behind, with me, saying, "When shall it be that I see thee again?" "I know not," I replied to him, "how long I may live; but truly my return will not be so speedy, that I shall not in desire he sooner at the shore;[1] because the place where I was set to live, denudes itself more of good from day to day, and seems ordained to wretched ruin." "Now go," said he, "for I see him who hath most fault for this[2] dragged at the tail of a beast, toward the valley where there is no disculpation ever. The beast at every step goes faster, increasing always till it strikes him, and leaves his body vilely undone. Those wheels have not far to turn," and he raised his eyes to heaven, "for that to become clear to thee which my speech cannot further declare. Now do thou stay behind, for time is so precious in this kingdom, that I lose too much coming thus at even pace with thee."

[1] Of Purgatory.

[2] Corso de' Donati, the leader of the Black Guelphs and chief cause of the evils of the city. On the 15th September, 1308, his enemies having risen against him, he was compelled to fly from Florence. Near the city he was thrown from his horse and dragged along, till he was overtaken and killed by his pursuers.

As a cavalier sometimes sets forth at a gallop from a troop which rides, and goes to win the honor of the first encounter, so he went away from us with greater strides; and I remained on the way with only those two who were such great marshals of the world.[1] And when he had entered so far before us that my eyes became such followers on him as my mind was on his words,[2] there appeared to me the laden and lusty branches of another apple-tree, and not far distant, because only then had I turned thitherward.[3] I saw people beneath it raising their hands and crying, I know not what, toward the leaves, like eager and fond little children who pray, and he they pray to answers not, hut, to make their longing very keen, holds aloft their desire, and conceals it not. Then they departed as if undeceived:[4] and now we came to the great tree that rejects so many prayers and tears. "Pass further onward, without drawing near; the tree[5] is higher up which was eaten of by Eve, and this plant has been raised from that." Thus among the branches I know not who was speaking; wherefore Virgil and Statius and I, drawing close together, went onward along the side that rises.[6] "Be mindful," the voice was saying, "of the accursed ones,[7] formed in the clouds, who, when glutted, strove against Theseus with their double breasts; and of the Hebrews, who, at the drinking, showed themselves soft,[8] wherefore Gideon wished them not for companions, when he went down the hills toward Midian."

[1] "A marshal is a ruler of the court and of the army under the emperor, and should know how to command what ought to be done, as those two poets knew what it was befitting to do in the world in respect to moral and civil life." — Buti.

[2] Could no longer follow him distinctly.

[3] In the circling course around the mountain.

[4] Having found vain the hope of reaching the fruit.

[5] The tree of knowledge, in the Earthly Paradise: Canto XXXII.

[6] On the inner side, by the wall of the mountain.

[7] The centaurs.

[8] Judges, vii. 4-7.

Thus keeping close to one of the two borders, we passed by, hearing of sins of gluttony followed, in sooth, by wretched gains. Then going at large along the lonely road, full a thousand steps and more had borne us onward, each of us in meditation without a word. "Why go ye thus in thought, ye three alone?" said a sudden voice; whereat I started as do terrified and timid beasts. I lifted up my head to see who it might be, and never were glass or metals seen so shining and

ruddy in a furnace as one I saw who said, “If it please you to mount up, here must a turn be taken; this way he goes who wishes to go for peace.” His aspect had taken my sight from me, wherefore I turned me behind my teachers like one who goes according as he hears.[1] And as, harbinger of the dawn, the breeze of May stirs and smells sweet, all impregnate with the herbage and with the flowers, such a wind I felt strike upon the middle of my forehead, and clearly felt the motion of the plumes which made mime perceive the odor of ambrosia. And I heard said, “Blessed are they whom so much grace illumines, that the love of taste inspires not in their breasts too great desire, hungering always so far as is just.”[2]

[1] Blinded for the instant by the dazzling brightness of the angel,Dante drops behind his teachers, to follow them as one guided by hearing only.

[2] “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” — Matthew, v.6.

Dante has already cited this Beatitude (Canto XXII.), applying it to those who are purging themselves from the inordinate desire for riches; he there omits the word “hunger,” as here he omits the “and thirst.”

CANTO XXV.

Ascent to the Seventh Ledge. — Discourse of Statius on generation, the infusion of the Soul into the body, and the corporeal semblance of Souls after death. — The Seventh Ledge: the Lustful. — The mode of their Purification.

It was the hour in which the ascent allowed no delay; for the meridian circle had been left by the Sun to the Bull, and by the Night to the Scorpion;[1] wherefore as the man doth who, whatever may appear to him, stops not, but goes on his way, if the goad of necessity prick him, so did we enter through the gap, one before the other, taking the stairway which by its narrowness unpairs the climbers.

[1] Taurus follows on Aries, so that the hour indicated is about 2 P.M. The Night here means the part of the Heavens opposite to the Sun.

And as the little stork that lifts its wing through will to fly, and dares not abandon the nest, and down it drops, so was I, with will to ask, kindled and quenched, coming even to the motion that he makes who proposes to speak. Nor, though our going was swift, did my sweet Father forbear, but he said, Discharge the bow of speech which up to the iron thou hast drawn." Then I opened my mouth confidently, and began, "How can one become thin, where the need of nourishment is not felt?" "If thou hadst called to mind how Meleager was consumed by time consuming of a brand this would not be," he said, " so difficult to thee; and if thou hadst thought, how at your quivering your image quivers within the mirror, that which seems hard would seem easy to thee. But that thou mayst to thy pleasure be inwardly at ease, lo, here is Statius, and I call on him and pray that he be now the healer of thy wounds." "If I explain to him the eternal view," replied Statius, "where thou art present, let it excuse me that to thee I cannot snake denial."[1]

[1] Here and elsewhere Statius seems to represent allegorically human philosophy enlightened by Christian teaching, dealing with questions of knowledge, not of faith.

Then he began, "If, son, thy mind regards and receives my words, they will be. for thee a light unto the 'how,' which thou askest.[1] The perfect blood which is never drunk by the thirsty veins, but remains like the food which thou removest from time table, takes in time heart virtue informative of all the human members; even as that blood does, which passes through the veins to become those members.[2] Digested yet again, it descends to the part whereof it is more becoming to be silent than to speak; and thence, afterwards, it drops upon another's blood in the natural vessel. There one and the other meet together; the one ordained to be passive, and the other to be active because of the perfect place[3] wherefrom it is pressed out; and, conjoined with the former, the latter

begins to operate, first by coagulating, and then by quickening that to which it gives consistency for its own material. The active virtue having become a soul, like that of a plant (in so far different that this is on the way, and that already arrived),[4] so worketh then, that now it moves and feels, as a sea-fungus doth; and then it proceeds to organize the powers of which it is the germ. Now, son, the virtue is displayed, now it is diffused, which issues from the heart of the begetter, where nature is intent on all the members.[5] But how from an animal it becomes a speaking being,[6] thou as yet seest not; this is such a point that once it made one wiser than thee to err, so that in his teaching he separated from the soul the potential intellect, because he saw no organ assumed by it.[7] Open thy heart unto the truth that is coming, and know that, so soon as in the foitus the articulation of the brain is perfect, the Primal Motor turns to it with joy over such art of nature, and inspires a new spirit replete with virtue, which draws that which it finds active there into its own substance, and makes one single soul which lives and feels and circles on itself. And that thou mayst the less wonder at this doctrine, consider the warmth of the sun which, combining with the juice that flows from the vine, becomes wine. And when Lachesis has no more thread, this soul is loosed from the flesh, and virtually bears away with itself both the human and the divine; the other faculties all of them mute,[8] but memory, understanding, and will[9] far more acute in action than before. Without staying, it falls of itself, marvelously to one of the banks.[10] Here it first knows its own roads. Soon as the place there circumscribes it, the formative virtue rays out around it in like manner, and as much as in the living members.[11] And as the air when it is full of rain becomes adorned with divers colors by another's rays which are reflected in it, so here the neighboring air shapes itself in that form which is virtually imprinted upon it by the soul that hath stopped.[12] And then like the flamelet which follows the fire wherever it shifts, so its new form follows the spirit. Since thereafter from this it has its aspect, it is called a shade; and by this it shapes the organ for every sense even to the sight; by this we speak, and by this we laugh, by this we make the tears and the sighs, which on the mountain thou mayst have perceived. According as the desires and the other affections impress us the shade is shaped; and this is the cause of that at which thou wonderest."

[1] The doctrine set forth by Statius in the following discourse is derived from St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol., i. 118, 119, who, in his turn, derived it from Aristotle. It is to be found, more briefly stated, in the Convito, iv. 21.

[2] A portion of the blood remains after the veins are supplied; in the heart all the blood receives the virtue by which it gives form to the various organs of the body.

[3] The heart.

[4] The vegetative soul in the plant has attained its full development, "has arrived;" in the animal is "on the way" to perfection.

[5] From the vegetative, the soul has become sensitive, — anima sensitiva.

[6] A being possessed of intellect, — the last stage in the progress of the soul, when it becomes came intellective.

[7] Averroes asserted the intellect to be impersonal and undivided in essence; not formally, but instrumentally only, united with the individual. Hence there was no personal immortality.

[8] The faculties of sense mute because their organs no longer exist.

[9]The spiritual faculties.

[10] Of Acheron or of Tiber, according as the soul is damned or saved.

[11] In this account of the formation of the bodily semblance in the spiritual realms, Statius no longer follows the doctrine of Aquinas. The conception is derived from Plato; but the form given to it is peculiar to Dante.

[12] Stopped in the place allotted to it.

And now we had come to the last circuit,[1] and turning to the right hand, we were intent upon another care. Here the bank shoots forth flame, and the ledge breathes a blast upward which drives it back, and sequesters a path from it.[2] Wherefore it was needful to go one by one along the unenclosed side; and on the one hand I was afraid of the fire, and on the other I was afraid of falling off. My Leader said, "Through this place, one must keep tight the rein upon the eyes, because for little one might go astray." "Summae Deus clementiae,"[3] in the bosom of the great burning then I heard singing, which made me care not less to turn. And I saw spirits going through the flame; wherefore I looked at them and at my own steps, apportioning to each my sight from moment to moment. After the end of that hymn, they loudly cried: "Virum non cognosco;"[4] then began again the hymn with low voice; this finished, they cried anew, "To the wood Diana kept herself, and drove therefrom Helice,[5] who had felt the poison of Venus." Then they turned to singing; then wives they cried out, and husbands who were chaste, as virtue and marriage enjoin upon us. And I believe this mode suffices them through all the time the fire burns them. With such cure it is needful, and with such food, that the last wound of all should be closed up.

[1] The word in the original is tortura. Benvenuto's comment is, "nunc incipiebant torquere et flectere viam, ideo talem deflectionem appellat torturam." Buti, on the contrary, says, "tortura cioe tormento."

[2] Secures a safe pathway along the ledge.

[3] "God of clemency supreme," the beginning of a hymn, sung at Matins, containing a prayer for purity.

[4] "I know not a man," the words of Mary to the angel — Luke, i. 34.

[5] Helice, or Callisto, the nymph who bore a son to Jupiter, and, having been changed to a bear by Juno, was by Jove transferred with her child to the heavens, where they are seen as the Great and Little Bear.

CANTO XXVI.

Seventh Ledge: the Lustful. — Sinners in the fire, going in opposite directions. — Guido Guinicelli. — Arnaut Daniel.

While we were going on thus along the edge, one before the other, and the good Master was often saying, “Take heed! let it avail that I warn thee,” the sun was striking me on the right shoulder, and now, raying out, was changing all the west from azure to a white aspect; and with my shadow I was making the flame appear more ruddy, and only at such an indication[1] I saw many shades, as they went on, give attention. This was the occasion which gave them a beginning to speak of me, and they began to say, “He seems not a fictitious body;” then toward me, so far as they could do so, certain of them canine, always with regard not to come out where they would not be burned.

[1] At this sign that Dante’s body was that of a living man.

“O thou! who goest, not from being slower, but perhaps from reverence, behind the others, reply to me who in thirst and fire am burning. Nor to me only is thy reply of need, for all these have a greater thirst for it than Indian or Ethiop of cold water. Tell us how it is that thou makest of thyself a wall to the sun, as if thou hadst not yet entered within the net of death.” Thus spoke to me one of them; and I should now have disclosed myself, if I had not been intent on another new thing which then appeared; for through the middle of the burning road were coming people with their faces opposite to these, who made me gaze in suspense. There I see, on every side, all the shades making haste and kissing each other, without stopping, content with brief greeting. Thus within their brown band one ant touches muzzle with another, perchance to enquire their way and their fortune.

Soon as they end the friendly salutation, before the first step runs on beyond, each strives to outcry the other; the new-come folk: “Sodom and Gomorrah,” and the other, “Into the cow enters Pasiphae, that the bull may run to her lust.” Then like cranes, of whom part should fly to the Riphaean mountains,[1] and part toward the sands,[2] these shunning the frost and those the sun, one folk goes, the other comes on, and weeping they return to their first chants, and to the cry which most befits them.

[1] Mountains vaguely placed by the early geographers in the far North.

[2] The deserts of the South.

And those same who had prayed me drew near to me as before, intent in their looks to listen. I, who twice had seen their desire, began, “O souls secure of having, whenever it may he, a state of peace, neither unripe nor mature have my limbs remained yonder, but they are here with me with their blood, and with their joints. I go up in order to be no longer blind. A Lady is on high who winneth grace for us, whereby I bring my mortal part through your world. But so may your greater will soon become satisfied, in such wise that the heaven may harbor you which is full of love, and most amply spreads, tell me, in order that I may yet rule the paper for it, who are ye, and who are that crowd which goes its way behind your backs.”

Not otherwise stupefied, the mountaineer is confused, and gazing round is dumb, when rough and savage he enters the town, than each shade became in his appearance; but, after they were unburdened of their bewilderment, which in high hearts is quickly assuaged, “Blessed thou,” began again that one who first had asked me, “who of our regions dost ship experience for dying better. The people who do not come with us offended in that for which once Caesar in his triumph heard ‘Queen’ cried out against him; therefore they go off shouting ‘Sodom,’ reproving themselves as thou hast heard, and aid the burning by their shame. Our sin was hermaphrodite; but because we observed not human law, following our appetite like beasts, when we part from them, the name of her who bestialized herself in the beast-shaped planks is uttered by us, in opprobrium of ourselves. Now thou knowest our deeds, and of what we were guilty; if, perchance, thou wishest to know by name who we are, there is not time to tell, and I could not do it. I will indeed make thee short of wish about myself; I am Guido Guinicelli;[1] and now I purify myself, because I truly repented before my last hour.”

[1] Of Bologna; he was living after the middle of the thirteenth century. Of his life little is known, but some of his verses survive and justify Dante’s words concerning them.

Such as in the sorrow of Lycurgus her two sons became at seeing again their mother,[1] such I became, but I rise not so far,[2] when I heard name himself the father of me, and of my betters who ever used sweet and gracious rhymes of love; and without hearing or speaking, full of thought I went on, gazing a long time upon him; nor, for the fire, did I draw nearer to him. After I was fed with looking, I offered myself wholly ready for his service, with the affirmation that makes another believe. And he to me, “By what I hear thou leavest such trace in me, and so bright, that Lethe cannot take it away nor make it dim. But if thy words have now sworn truth, tell me what is time cause why in speech and look thou showest that thou dost hold me dear?” And I to him, “The sweet ditties of

yours, which, so long as the modern fashion shall endure, will still make dear their ink." "O brother," said he, "this one whom I distinguish for thee with my finger," and he pointed to a spirit in advance,[3] "was a better smith of the maternal speech. In verses of love, and prose of romances, he excelled all, and let the foolish talk who think that he of Limoges[4] surpasses him; to rumor more than to truth they turn their faces, and thus confirm their own opinion, before art or reason is listened to by them. Thus did many of old concerning Guittone,[5] from cry to cry only to him giving the prize, until the truth has prevailed with more persons. Now if thou hast such ample privilege that it he permitted thee to go unto the cloister in which Christ is abbot of the college, say for me to him one paternoster, so far as needs for us in this world where power to sin is no longer ours."[6]

[1] "Lycurgus, King of Nemaea, enraged with Hypsipyle for leaving his infant child, who was killed by a serpent, while she was showing the river Langia to the Argives (see Canto XXII.), was about to kill her, when she was found and rescued by her own suns." — Statius, Thebaid, v. 721 (Pollock).

[2] I was more restrained than they.

[3] Arnaut Daniel, a famous troubadour.

[4] Gerault de Berneil.

[5] Guittone d' Arezzo (see Canto XXIV.).

[6] The words in the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from temptation," are not needed for the spirits in Purgatory.

Then, perhaps to give place to the other who was near behind him, he disappeared through the fire, even as through the water a fish going to the bottom. I moved forward a little to him who had been pointed out to me, and said, that for his name my desire was making ready a gracious place. He began graciously to say,[1] "So pleaseth me your courteous demand that I cannot, and I will not, hide me from you. I am Arnaut who weep and go singing; contrite I see my past folly, and joyful I see before me the day I hope for. Now I pray you by that virtue which guides you to the summit of the stair, at times be mindful of my pain." Then he hid himself in the fire that refines them.

[1] The words of Daniel are in the Provencal tongue.

CANTO XXVII.

Seventh Ledge: the Lustful. — Passage through the Flames. — Stairway in the rock. — Night upon the stairs. — Dream of Dante. — Morning. — Ascent to the Earthly Paradise. — Last words of Virgil.

As when he darts forth his first rays there where his Maker shed His blood (Ebro falling under the lofty Scales, and the waves in the Ganges scorched by noon) so the sun was now standing;[1] so that the day was departing, when the glad Angel of God appeared to us. Outside the flame he was standing on the bank, and was singing, “Beati mundo corde,”[2] in a voice far more living than ours: then, “No one goes further, ye holy souls, if first the fire sting not; enter into it, and to the song beyond be ye not deaf,” he said to us, when we were near him. Whereat I became such, when I heard him, as is he who in the pit is put.[3] With hands clasped upwards, I stretched forward, looking at the fire, and imagining vividly human bodies I had once seen burnt. The good Escorts turned toward me, and Virgil said to me, “My son, here may be torment, but not death. Bethink thee! bethink thee! and if I even upon Geryon guided thee safe, what shall I do now that I am nearer God? Believe for certain that if within the belly of this flame thou shouldst stand full a thousand years, it could not make thee bald of one hair. And if thou perchance believest that I deceive thee, draw near to it, and make trial for thyself with fine own hands on the hem of thy garments. Put aside now, put aside every fear; turn hitherward, and come on secure.”

[1] It was near sunrise at Jerusalem, and consequently near sunset in Purgatory, midnight in Spain, and midday at the Ganges.

[2] “Blessed are the pure in heart.”

[3] Who is condemned to be buried alive.

And I still motionless and against conscience!

When he saw me still stand motionless and obdurate, he said, disturbed a little, “Now see, son, between Beatrice and thee is this wall.”

As at the name of Thisbe, Pyramus, at point of death, opened his eyelids and looked at her, what time the mulberry became vermilion, so, my obduracy becoming softened, I turned me to the wise Leader, hearing the name that in my memory is ever welling up. Whereat he nodded his head, amid said, “How! do we want to stay on this side?” then he smiled as one doth at a child who is conquered by an apple.

Then within the fire he set himself before me, praying Statius, that he would come behind, who previously, on the long road, had divided us. When I was in, into boiling glass I would have thrown myself to cool me, so without measure

was the burning there. My sweet Father, to encourage me, went talking ever of Beatrice, saying, “I seem already to see her eyes. A voice was guiding us, which was singing on the other side, and we, ever attentive to it, came forth there where was the ascent. “Venite, benedicti patris mei,”[1] sounded within a light that was there such that it overcame me, and I could not look on it. “The sun departs,” it added, “and the evening comes; tarry not, but hasten your steps so long as the west grows not dark.”

[1] “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” — Matthew, xxv. 34.

The way mounted straight, through the rock, in such direction[1] that I cut off in front of me the rays of the sun which was already low. And of few stairs had we made essay ere, by the vanishing of the shadow, both I and my Sages perceived behind us the setting of the sun. And before the horizon in all its immense regions had become of one aspect, and night had all her dispensations, each of us made of a stair his bed; for the nature of the mountain took from us the power more than the delight of ascending.

[1] Toward the east.

As goats, who have been swift and wayward on the peaks ere they are fed, become tranquil as they ruminate, silent in the shade while the sun is hot, guarded by the herdsman, who on his staff is leaning and, leaning, watches them; and as the shepherd, who lodges out of doors, passes the night beside his quiet flock, watching that the wild beast may not scatter it: such were we all three then, I like a goat, and they hike shepherds, hemmed in on this side and on that by the high rock. Little of the outside could there appear, but through that little I saw the stars both brighter and larger than their wont. Thus ruminating, and thus gazing upon them, sleep overcame me, sleep which oft before a deed be done knows news thereof.

At the hour, I think, when from the east on the mountain first beamed Cytherea, who with fire of love seems always burning, I seemed in dream to see a lady, young and beautiful, going through a meadow gathering flowers, and singing she was saying, “Let him know, whoso asks my name, that I am Leah, and I go moving my fair hands around to make myself a garland. To please me at the glass here I adorn me, but my sister Rachel never withdraws from her mirror, and sits all day. She is as fain to look with her fair eyes as I to adorn me with my hands. Her seeing, and me doing, satisfies.”[1]

[1] Leah and Rachel are the types of the active and the contemplative life.

And now before the splendors which precede the dawn, and rise the more grateful unto pilgrims as in returning they lodge less remote,[1] the shadows fled

away on every side, and my sleep with them; whereupon I rose, seeing my great Masters already risen. That pleasant apple which through so many branches the care of mortals goes seeking, to-day shall put in peace thy hungerings." Virgil used words such as these toward me, and never were there gifts which could be equal in pleasure to these. Such wish upon wish came to me to be above, that at every step thereafter I felt the feathers growing for my flight.

[1] As they come nearer home.

When beneath us all the stairway had been run, and we were on the topmost step, Virgil fixed his eyes on me, and said, "The temporal fire and the eternal thou hast seen, son, and art come to a place where of myself no further onward I discern. I have brought thee here with understanding and with art; thine own pleasure now take thou for guide: forth art thou from the steep ways, forth art thou from the narrow. See there the sun, which on thy front doth shine; see the young grass, the flowers, the shrubs, which here the earth of itself alone produces. Until rejoicing come the beautiful eyes which weeping made me come to thee, thou canst sit down and thou canst go among them. Expect no more or word or sign from me. Free, upright, and sane is thine own free will, and it would be wrong not to act according to its pleasure; wherefore thee over thyself I crown and mitre."

CANTO XXVIII.

The Earthly Paradise. — The Forest. — A Lady gathering flowers on the bank of a little stream. — Discourse with her concerning the nature of the place.

Fain now to search within and round about the divine forest dense and living, which tempered the new day to my eyes, without longer waiting I left the bank, taking the level ground very slowly, over the soil that everywhere breathes fragrance. A sweet breeze that had no variation in itself struck me on the brow, not with heavier blow than a soft wind; at which the branches, readily trembling, all of them were bending to the quarter where the holy mountain casts its first shadow; yet not so far parted from their straightness, that the little birds among the tops would leave the practice of their every art; but with full joy singing they received the early breezes among the leaves, which kept a burden to their rhymes, such as gathers from bough to bough through the pine forest upon the shore of Chiassi, when Aeolus lets forth Sirocco.[1]

[1] The south-east wind.

Now had my show steps carried me within the ancient wood so far that I could not see back to where I had entered it: and lo, a stream took from me further progress, which toward the left with its little waves was bending the grass that sprang upon its bank. All the waters, that are purest on the earth, would seem to have some mixture in them, compared with that which hides nothing, although it moves along dusky under the perpetual shadow, which never lets the sun or moon shine there.

With feet I stayed, and with my eyes I passed to the other side of the streamlet, to gaze at the great variety of the fresh may; and there appeared to me, even as a thing appears suddenly which turns aside through wonder every other thought, a solitary lady, who was going along, singing, and culling flower from flower, wherewith all her path was painted. “Ah, fair Lady,[1] who warmest thyself in the rays of love, if I may trust to looks which are wont to be witnesses of the heart, may the will come to thee,” said I to her, “to draw forward toward this stream, so far that I can understand what thou art singing. Thou makest me remember where and what was Proserpine, at the time when her mother lost her, and she the spring.”

[1] This lady is the type of the life of virtuous activity. Her name, as appears later, is Matilda. Why this name was chosen for her, and whether she stands for any earthly personage, has been the subject of vast and still open debate.

As a lady who is dancing turns with feet close to the ground and to each other, and hardly sets foot before foot, she turned herself on the red and on the yellow flowerets toward me, not otherwise than a virgin who lowers her modest eyes, and made my prayers content, approaching so that the sweet sound came to me with its meaning. Soon as she was there where the grasses are now bathed by the waves of the fair stream, she bestowed on me the gift of lifting her eyes. I do not believe that so great a light shone beneath the lids of Venus, transfixed by her son, beyond all his custom. She was smiling upon the opposite right bank, gathering with her hands more colors which that high land brings forth without seed. The stream made us three paces apart; but the Hellespont where Xerxes passed it — a curb still on all human pride — endured not more hatred from Leander for swelling between Sestos and Abydos, than that from me because it opened not then. “Ye are new come,” she began, “and, perchance, why I smile mu this place chosen for human nature as its nest, some doubt holds you marvelling; but the psalm ‘Delectasti’[1] affords light which may uncloud your understanding.And thou who art in front, and didst pray to me, say, if else thou wouldst hear, for I came ready for every question of thine, so far as may suffice.” “The water,” said I, “and the sound of the forest, impugn within me recent faith in something that I heard contrary to this.” Whereon she, “I will tell, how from its own cause proceeds that which makes thee wonder; and I will clear away the mist which strikes thee.

[1] Psalm xcii. 4. “Delectasti me, Domine, in factura tua, et in operibus mannuum tuarum exultabo.” “For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands.”

“The supreme Good, which itself alone is pleasing to itself, made man good, and for good, and gave this place for earnest to him of eternal peace. Through his own default he dwelt here little while; through his own default to tears and to toil he changed honest laughter and sweet play. In order that the disturbance, which the exhalations of the water and of the earth (which follow so far as they can the heat) produce below, might not make any war on man, this mountain rose so high toward heaven, and is free from them from the point where it is locked in.[1] Now because the whole air revolves in circuit with the primal revolution,[2] if its circle be not broken by some projection, upon this height, which is wholly disengaged in the living air, this motion strikes, and makes the wood, since it is dense, resound; and the plant being struck hath such power that with its virtue it impregnates the breeze, and this then in its whirling scatters it around: and the rest of the earth, according as it is fit in itself, or through its sky, conceives and brings forth divers trees of divers virtues. It should not seem a marvel then on earth, this being heard, when some plant, without manifest seed,

there takes hold. And thou must know that the holy plain where thou art is full of every seed, and has fruit in it which yonder is not gathered. The water which thou seest rises not from a vein restored by vapor which the frost condenses, like a stream that gains and loses breath, but it issues from a fountain constant and sure, which by the will of God regains as much as, open on two sides, it pours forth. On this side it descends with virtue that takes from one the memory of sin; on the other it restores that of every good deed. Here Lethe, so on the other side Eunoe it is called; and it works not if first it be not tasted on this side and on that. To all other savors this is superior.

[1] Above the level of the gate through which Purgatory is entered, as Statius has already explained (Canto XXI), the vapors of earth do not rise.

[2] With the movement given to it by the motions of the heavens.

"And, though thy thirst may be fully sated even if I disclose no more to thee, I will yet give thee a corollary for grace; nor do I think my speech may be less dear to thee, if beyond promise it enlarge itself with thee. Those who in ancient time told in poesy of the Age of Gold, and of its happy state, perchance upon Parnassus dreamed of this place: here was the root of mankind innocent; here is always spring, and every fruit; this is the nectar of which each tells."

I turned me back then wholly to my Poets, and saw that with a smile they had heard the last sentence; then to the beautiful Lady I turned my face.

CANTO XXIX.

The Earthly Paradise. — Mystic Procession or Triumph of the Church.

Singing like a lady enamored, she, at the ending of her words, continued: “Beati, quorum tecta sunt peccata;”[1] and, like nymphs who were wont to go solitary through the sylvan shades, this one desiring to see and that to avoid the sun, she moved on then counter to the stream, going up along the bank, and I at even pace with her, following her little step with little. Of her steps and mine were not a hundred, when the banks both like gave a turn, in such wise that toward the east I faced again. Nor thus had our way been long, when the lady wholly turned round to me, saying, “My brother, look and listen.” And lo! a sudden lustre ran from all quarters through the great forest, so that it put me in suspect of lightning. But because the lightning ceases even as it comes, and this, hasting, became more and more resplendent, in my thought I said, “What thing is this?” And a sweet melody ran through the luminous air; whereupon a righteous zeal caused me to blame the temerity of Eve, that, there, where time earth and the heavens were obedient, the woman only, and but just now formed, did not endure to stay under any veil; under which if she had devoutly stayed I should have tasted those ineffable delights before, and for a longer time. While I was going on and such first fruits of the eternal pleasure, all enrapt, and still desirous of more joys, in front of us the air under the green branches became like a blazing fire, and the sweet sound was now heard as a song.

[1] “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven.” — Psalm xxxii. 1.

O Virgins sacrosanct, if ever hunger, cold, or vigils I have endured for you, time occasion spurs me that I claim reward therefor. Now it behoves that Helicon pour forth for me, and Urania aid me with her choir to put in verse things difficult to think.

A little further on, the long tract of space which was still between us and them presented falsely what seemed seven trees of gold. But when I had come so near to them that the common object, which deceives the sense,[1] lost not through distance any of its attributes, the power which supplies discourse to reason distinguished them as candlesticks,[2] and in the voices of the song, “Hosanna.” From above the fair array was flaming, brighter by far than the Moon in the serene of midnight, in the middle of her month. I turned me round full of wonder to the good Virgil, and he replied to me with a look charged not less with amazement. Then I turned back my face to the high things that were moving

toward us so slowly they would have been outstripped by new-made brides. The lady cried to me, “Why burnest thou only thus with affection for the living lights, and lookest not at that which comes behind them?” Then saw I folk coming behind, as if after their leaders, clothed in white, and such purity there never was on earth. The water was resplendent on the left flank, and reflected to me my left side, if I looked in it, even as a mirror. When on my bank I had such position that only the stream separated me, in order to see better, I gave halt to my steps. And I saw the flamelets go forward heaving the air behind them painted, and they had the semblance of streaming pennons, so that there above it remained divided by seven stripes all in those colors whereof the sun makes his bow, and Delia her girdle.[3] These banners to the rear were longer than my sight, and according to my judgment the outermost were ten paces apart. Under so fair a sky as I describe, twenty-four elders,[4] two by two, were coming crowned with flower-de-luce. All were singing, “Blessed thou among the daughters of Adam, and blessed forever be thy beauties.”

[1] An object which has properties common to many things, so that at a distance the sight cannot distinguish its specific nature.

[2] The imagery of the Triumph of the Church here described is largely taken from this Apocalypse. “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.” — Revelation, i. 12. “And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” — Id., iv. 5. “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” — Isiah xi. 2.

[3] Delia, the moon, and her girdle the halo.

[4] “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment.” — Revelation, iv. 4. These four and twenty elders in white raiment, and crowned with white lilies, white being the color of faith, symbolize the books of the Old Testament.

After the flowers, and the other fresh herbage opposite to me on the other bank, were free from those folk elect, even as light followeth light in heaven, came behind them four living creatures, crowned each one with green leaves. Every one was feathered with six wings, the feathers full of eyes; and the eyes of Argus were they living would be such. To describe their forms I scatter rhymes no more, Reader; for other spending constrains me so that in this I cannot be liberal. But read Ezekiel, who depicts them as he saw them coming from the cold region with wind, with cloud, and with fire; and such as thou wilt find them in his pages such were they here, save that as to the wings John is with me, and differs from him.[1]

[1] These four living creatures symbolize the Gospels. Ezekiel (i.6) describes the creatures with four wings, but in the Revelation (iv. 8) John assigns to each of them six wings: “and they were full of eyes within.” They are crowned with green, as the color of hope.

The space between these four contained a triumphal chariot upon two wheels, which by the neck of a griffon[1] came drawn along. And he stretched up one and the other of his wings between the midmost stripe, and the three and three, so

that he did harm to no one of them by cleaving it. So far they rose that they were not seen. His members were of gold so far as he was bird, and the rest were white mixed with red. Not Africanus, or indeed Augustus, gladdened Rome with so beautiful a chariot; but even that of the Sun would be poor to it, — that of the Sun which, going astray,[2] was consumed at the prayer of the devout Earth, when Jove in his secrecy was just. Three ladies,[3] at the right wheel, came dancing in a circle; one so ruddy that hardly would she have been noted in the fire; the next was as if her flesh and bones had been made of emerald; the third seemed snow just fallen. And now they seemed led by the white, now by the red, and from her song the others took their step both slow and swift. On the left four[4] robed in purple made festival, following the measure of one of them who had three eyes in her head.

[1] The griffon, half eagle and half lion, represents Christ in his double nature, divine and human. The car which he draws is the Church.

[2] When driven by Phaethon.

[3] The theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, of the colors respectively appropriate to them.

[4] The four cardinal Virtues, in purple, the imperial color, typifying their rule over human conduct. Prudence has three eyes, as looking at the past, the present, and the future.

Next after all the group described, I saw two old men, unlike in dress, but like in action, both dignified and staid. The one showed himself one of the familiars of that supreme Hippocrates whom Nature made for the creatures that she holds most dear[1] the other showed the contrary care,[2] with a shining and sharp sword, such that it caused me fear on the hither side of the stream. Then I saw four humble in appearance, and behind all an old man solitary coming asleep with lively countenance.[3] And these seven were robed like the first band; but they made not a thicket of lilies round their heads, rather of roses, and of other red flowers. The sight at little distance would have sworn that all were aflame above their brows. And when the chariot was opposite to me thunder was heard, and those worthy people seemed to have further progress interdicted, stopping there with the first ensigns.

[1] The book of Acts, represented under rho type of its author, St. Luke, “the beloved physician.” Colossians, iv. 14. Man is the creature whom Nature holds dearest.

[2] The Pauline Epistles, typified by their writer, whose sword is the symbol of war and martyrdom, a contrary care to the healing of men.

[3] The four humble in appearance are personifications of the writers of the minor Epistles, followed by St. John, as the writer of the Revelation, asleep, and yet with lively countenance, because he was “in the Spirit” when he beheld his vision.

CANTO XXX.

The Earthly Paradise. — Beatrice appears. — Departure of Virgil. — Reproof of Dante by Beatrice.

When the septentrion of the first heaven[1] which never setting knew, nor rising, nor veil of other cloud than sin, — and which was making every one there acquainted with his duty, as the lower[2] makes whoever turns the helm to come to port, — stopped still, the truthful people[3] who had come first between the griffon and it,[4] turned to the chariot as to their peace, and one of them, as if sent from heaven, singing, cried thrice, "Veni, sponsa, de Libano,"[5] and all the others after.

[1] The seven candlesticks, symbols of the sevenfold spirit of the Lord.

[2] The lower septentrion, or the seven stars of the Great Bear.

[3] The personifications of the truthful books of the Old Testament.

[4] The septentrion of candlesticks.

[5] "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse." — The Song of Solomon, iv. 8.

As time blessed at the last trump will arise swiftly, each from his tomb, singing hallelujah with recovered voice,[1] so upon the divine chariot, ad vocem tanti senis,[2] rose up a hundred ministers and messengers of life eternal. All were saying, "Benedictus, qui venis,"[3] and, scattering flowers above and around, "Manibus o date lilia plenis."[4]

[1] "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia-" — Revelation, xix. 1.

[2] "At the voice of so great an elder;" these words are in Latin apparently only for the sake of the rhyme.

[3] "Blessed thou that comest."

[4] "Oh, give lilies with full hands;" words from the Aeneid, vi. 884, sung by the angels.

I have seen ere now at the beginning of the day the eastern region all rosy, while the rest of heaven was beautiful with fair clear sky; and the face of the sun rise shaded, so that through the tempering of vapors the eye sustained it a long while. Thus within a cloud of flowers, which from the angelic hands was ascending, and falling down again within and without, a lady, with olive wreath above a white veil, appeared to me, robed with the color of living flame beneath a green mantle.[1] And my spirit that now for so long a time had not been broken down, trembling with amazement at her presence, without having more knowledge by the eyes, through occult virtue that proceeded from her, felt the great potency of ancient love.

[1] The olive is the symbol of wisdom and of peace the three colors are those of Faith, Charity, and Hope.

Soon as upon my sight the lofty virtue smote, which already had transfixed me ere I was out of boyhood, I turned me to the left with the confidence with which the little child runs to his mother when he is frightened, or when he is troubled, to say to Virgil, “Less than a drachm of blood remains in me that doth not tremble; I recognize the signals of the ancient flame,”[1] — but Virgil had left us deprived of himself; Virgil, sweetest Father, Virgil to whom I for my salvation gave me. Nor did all which the ancient mother lost[2] avail unto my cheeks, cleansed with dew,[3] that they should not turn dark again with tears.

[1] “Agnosco veteris vestigia flammae.” — Aeneid, iv. 23.

[2] All the beauty of Paradise which Eve lost.

[3] See Canto I.

“Dante, though Virgil be gone away, weep not yet, weep not yet, for it behoves thee to weep by another sword.”

Like an admiral who, on poop or on prow, comes to see the people that are serving on the other ships, and encourages them to do well, upon the left border of the chariot, — when I turned me at the sound of my own name, which of necessity is registered here, — I saw the Lady, who had first appeared to me veiled beneath the angelic festival, directing her eyes toward me across the stream although the veil, which descended from her head, circled by the leaf of Minerva, did not allow her to appear distinctly. Royally, still haughty in her mien, she went on, as one who speaks, and keeps back his warmest speech: “Look at me well: I am, indeed, I am, indeed, Beatrice. How hast thou deigned to approach the mountain? Didst thou know that man is happy here?” My eyes fell down into the clear fount; but seeing myself in it I drew them to the grass, such great shame burdened my brow. As to the son the mother seems proud, so she seemed to me; for somewhat bitter tasteth the savor of stern pity. She was silent, and the angels sang of a sudden, “In te, Domine, speravi;” but beyond “pedes meos”[1] they did not pass. Even as the snow, among the living rafters upon the back of Italy, is congealed, blown and packed by Sclavonian winds, then melting trickles through itself, if only the land that loses shadow breathe,[2] so that it seems a fire that melts the candle: so was I without tears and sighs before the song of those who time their notes after the notes of the eternal circles. But when I heard in their sweet accords their compassion for me, more than if they had said, “Lady, why dost thou so confound him?” the ice that was bound tight around my heart became breath and water, and with anguish poured from my breast through my mouth and eyes.

[1] “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name’s

sake lead me, and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities. And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room." — Psalm xxxi. 1-8.

[2] If the wind blow from Africa.

She, still standing motionless on the aforesaid side of the chariot, then turned her words to those pious[1] beings thus: "Ye watch in the eternal day, so that nor night nor slumber robs from you one step the world may make along its ways; wherefore my reply is with greater care, that he who is weeping yonder may understand me, so that fault and grief may be of one measure. Not only through the working of the great wheels,[2] which direct every seed to some end according as the stars are its companions, but through largess of divine graces, which have for their rain vapors so lofty that our sight goes not near thereto, — this man was such in his new life, virtually, that every right habit would have made admirable proof in him. But so much the more malign and more savage becomes the land ill-sown and untilled, as it has more of good terrestrial vigor. Some time did I sustain him with my face; showing my youthful eyes to him I led him with me turned in right direction. So soon as I was upon the threshold of my second age, and had changed life, this one took himself from me, and gave himself to others. When from flesh to spirit I had ascended, and beauty and virtue were increased in me, I was less dear and less pleasing to him; and he turned his steps along a way not true, following false images of good, which pay no promise in full. Nor did it avail me to obtain[3] inspirations with which, both in dream and otherwise, I called him back; so little did he heed them. So low he fell that all means for his salvation were already short, save showing him the lost people. For this I visited the gate of the dead, and to him, who has conducted him up hither, my prayers were borne with weeping. The high decree of God would be broken, if Lethe should be passed, and such viands should be tasted without any scot of repentance which may pour forth tears."

[1] Both devout and piteous.

[2] The circling heavens.

[3] Through the grace of God.

CANTO XXXI.

The Earthly Paradise. — Reproachful discourse of Beatrice, amid confession of Dante. — Passage of Lethe. — Appeal of the Virtues to Beatrice. — Her Unveiling.

"O thou who art on the further side of the sacred river," turning her speech with the point to me, which only by the edge had seemed to me keen, she began anew, going on without delay, "say, say, if this is true: to so great an accusation it behoves that thine own confession be conjoined." My power was so confused, that the voice moved, and became extinct before it could be released by its organs. A little she bore it; then she said, "What thinkest thou? Reply to me; for the sad memories in thee are not yet injured by the water."[1] Confusion and fear together mingled forced such a "Yes" from out my mouth, that the eyes were needed for the understanding of it.

[1] Are still vivid, not yet obliterated by the water of Lethe.

As a cross-bow breaks its cord and its bow when it shoots with too great tension, and with less force the shaft hits the mark, so did I burst under that heavy load, pouring forth tears and sighs, and the voice slackened along its passage. Whereupon she to me, "Within those desires of mine[1] that were leading thee to love the Good beyond which there is nothing whereto man may aspire, what trenches running traverse, or what chains didst thou find, for which thou wert obliged thus to abandon the hope of passing onward? And what enticements, or what advantages on the brow of the others were displayed,[2] for which thou wert obliged to court them?" After the drawing of a bitter sigh, hardly had I the voice that answered, and the lips with difficulty gave it form. Weeping, I said, "The present things with their false pleasure turned my steps, soon as your face was hidden." And she: "Hadst thou been silent, or hadst thou denied that which thou dost confess, thy fault would be not less noted, by such a Judge is it known. But when the accusation of the sin, bursts from one's own cheek, in our court the wheel turns itself back against the edge. But yet, that thou mayst now bear shame for thy error, and that another time, hearing the Sirens, thou mayst be stronger, hay aside the seed of weeping, and listen; so shalt thou hear how in opposite direction my buried flesh ought to have moved thee. Never did nature or art present to thee pleasure such as the fair limbs wherein I was enclosed; and they are scattered in earth. And if the supreme pleasure thus failed thee through my death, what mortal thing ought then to have drawn thee into its desire? Forsooth thou oughtest, at the first arrow of things deceitful, to have risen up, following me who was no longer such. Nor should thy wings have

weighed thee downward to await more blows, either girl or other vanity of so brief a use. The young little bird awaits two or three; but before the eyes of the full-fledged, the net is spread in vain, the arrow shot."

[1] Inspired by me.

[2] The false pleasures of the world.

As children, ashamed, dumb, with eyes upon the ground, stand listening and conscience-stricken and repentant, so was I standing. And she said, "Since through hearing thou art grieved, lift up thy beard, and thou shalt receive more grief in seeing." With less resistance is a sturdy oak uprooted by a native wind, or by one from the land of Iarbas,[1] than I raised up my chin at her command; and when by the beard she asked for my eyes, truly I recognized the venom of the argument.[2] And as my face stretched upward, my sight perceived that those primal creatures were resting from their strewing, and my eyes, still little assured, saw Beatrice turned toward the animal that is only one person in two natures.[3] Beneath her veil and beyond the stream she seemed to me more to surpass her ancient self, than she surpassed the others here when she was here. So pricked me there the nettle of repentance, that of all other things the one which most turned me aside unto its love became most hostile to me.[4]

[1] From Numidia, of which Iarbas was king.

[2] Because indicating the lack of that wisdom which should pertain to manhood.

[3] The griffon.

[4] That object which had most seduced me from the love of Beatrice was now the most hateful to me.

Such contrition stung my heart that I fell overcome; and what I then became she knows who afforded me the cause.

Then, when my heart restored my outward faculties, I saw above me the lady whom I had found alone,[1] and she was saying, "Hold me, hold me." She had drawn me into the stream up to the throat, and dragging me behind was moving upon the water light as a shuttle. When I was near the blessed shore, "Asperges me"[2] I heard so sweetly that I cannot remember it, far less can write it. The beautiful lady opened her arms, clasped my head, and plunged me in where it behoved that I should swallow the water.[3] Then she took me, and, thus bathed, brought me within the dance of the four beautiful ones,[4] and each of them covered me with her arm. "Here we are nymphs, and in heaven we are stars: ere Beatrice had descended to the world we were ordained unto her for her handmaids. We will head thee to her eyes; but in the joyous light which is within them, the three yonder who deeper gaze shall make keen thine own."[5] Thus

singing, they began; and then to the breast of the griffon they led me with them, where Beatrice was standing turned toward us. They said, “See that thou sparest not thy sight: we have placed thee before the emeralds whence Love of old drew his arrows upon thee.” A thousand desires hotter than flame bound my eyes to the relucent eyes which only upon the griffon were standing fixed. As the sun in a mirror, not otherwise the twofold animal was gleaming therewithin, now with one, now with another mode.[6] Think, Reader, if I marvelled when I saw the thing stand quiet in itself, while in its image it was transmuting itself.

[1] Matilda.

[2] The first words of the seventh verse of the fifty-first Psalm: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

[3] The drinking of the waters of Lethe which obliterate the memory of sin.

[4] The four Cardinal Virtues.

[5] The Cardinal Virtues lead up to Theology, or the knowledge of Divine things, but the Evangelic Virtues are needed to penetrate within them.

[6] Mode of being, — the divine and the human.

While, full of amazement and glad, my soul was tasting that food which, sating of itself, causes hunger for itself, the other three, showing themselves in their bearing of loftier order, came forward dancing to their angelic melody. “Turn, Beatrice, turn thy holy eyes,” was their song, “upon thy faithful one, who to see thee has taken so many steps. For grace do us the grace that thou unveil to hum thy mouth, so that he may discern the second beauty which thou concealest.”[1]

[1] “The eyes of Wisdom are her demonstrations by which one sees the truth most surely; and her smile is her persuasions in which the interior light of Wisdom is displayed without any veil; and in these two is felt that loftiest pleasure of Beatitude, which is the chief good in Paradise.” — Convito, iii 15.

Oh splendor of living light eternal! Who hath become so pallid under the shadow of Parnassus, or hath so drunk at its cistern, that he would not seem to have his mind encumbered, trying to represent thee as thou didst appear there where in harmony the heaven overshadows thee when in the open air thou didst thyself disclose?

CANTO XXXII.

The Earthly Paradise. — Return of the Triumphal procession. — The Chariot bound to the Mystic Tree. — Sleep of Dante. — His waking to find the Triumph departed. — Transformation of the Chariot. — The Harlot and the Giant.

So fixed and intent were mine eyes to relieve their ten years' thirst, that my other senses were all extinct: and they themselves, on one side and the other, had a wall of disregard, so did the holy smile draw them to itself with the old net; when perforce my sight was turned toward my left by those goddesses,[1] because I heard from them a "Too fixedly."[2] And the condition which exists for seeing in eyes but just now smitten by the sun caused me to be some time without sight. But when the sight reshaped itself to the little (I say to the little, in respect to the great object of the sense wherefrom by force I had removed myself), I saw that the glorious army had wheeled upon its right flank, and was returning with the sun and with the seven flames in its face.

[1] The three heavenly Virtues.

[2] "Thou lookest too fixedly; thou hast yet other duties than contemplation."

As under its shields to save itself a troop turns and wheels with its banner, before it all can change about, that soldiery of the celestial realm which was in advance had wholly gone past us before its front beam[1] had bent the chariot round. Then to the wheels the ladies returned, and the griffon moved his blessed burden, in such wise however that no feather of him shook. The beautiful lady who had drawn me at the ford, and Statius and I were following the wheel which made its orbit with the smaller arc. So walking through the lofty wood, empty through fault of her who trusted to the serpent, an angelic song set the time to our steps. Perhaps an arrow loosed from the bow had in three flights reached such a distance as we had advanced, when Beatrice descended. I heard "Adam!" murmured by all:[2] then they circled a plant despoiled of flowers and of other leafage on every bough.[3] Its branches, which so much the wider spread the higher up they are,[4] would be wondered at for height by the Indians in their woods.

[1] Its pole.

[2] In reproach of him who had in disobedience tasted of the fruit of this tree.

[3] After the sin of Adam the plant was despoiled of virtue till the coming of Christ.

[4] The branches of the tree of knowledge spread widest as they are nearest to the Divine Source of truth.

“Blessed art thou, Griffon, that thou dost not break off with thy beak of this wood sweet to the taste, since the belly is ill racked thereby.”[1] Thus around the sturdy tree the others cried; and the animal of two natures: “So is preserved the seed of all righteousness.”[2] And turning to the pole that he had drawn, he dragged it to the foot of the widowed trunk, and that which was of it[3] he left bound to it.

[1] “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” — Romans, v. 19.

[2] “That as sin had reigned unto deaths, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord.” — Id., v. 21.

[3] This pole, the mystic type of the cross of Christ, supposed to have been made of the wood of this tree.

As our plants, when the great light falls downward mingled with that which shines behind the celestial Carp,[1] become swollen, and then renew themselves, each in its own color, ere the sun yoke his coursers under another star, so disclosing a color less than of roses and more than of violets, the plant renewed itself, which first had its boughs so bare.[2] I did not understand the hymn, and it is not sung here,[3] which that folk then sang, nor did I hear the melody to the end.

[1] In this spring, when the Sun is in Aries, the sign which follows that of the Pisces here termed the Carp.

[2] This tree, after the death of Christ, still remains this symbol of the knowledge of good and of evil, as well as this sign of obedience to the Divine Will. Its renewal with flowers and foliage seems to he the image at once of the revelation of Divine truth through Christ, and of his obedience unto death.

[3] On earth.

If I could portray how the pitiless eyes[1] sank to slumber, while hearing of Syrinx, the eyes to which too much watching cost so dear, hike a painter who paints from a model I would depict how I fell asleep; but whoso would, let him be one who can picture slumber well.[2] Therefore I pass on to when I awoke, and say that a splendor rent for me the veil of sleep, and a call, “Arise, what doest thou?”

[1] The hundred eyes of Argus, who, when watching Io, fell asleep while listening to the tale of the loves of Pan and Syrinx, and was then slain by Mercury.

[2] The sleep of Dante may signify the impotency of human reason to explain the mysteries of redemption.

As, to see some of the flowerets of the apple-tree[1] which makes the Angels greedy of its fruit,[2] and makes perpetual bridal feasts in Heaven,[3] Peter and John and James were led,[4] and being overcome, came to themselves at the word by which greater slumbers[5] were broken, and saw their band diminished alike by Moses and Elias, and the raiment of their Master changed, so I came to myself, and saw that compassionate one standing above me, who first had been conductress of my steps along the stream; and all in doubt I said, “Where is

Beatrice?" And she, "Behold her under the new leafage sitting upon its root. Behold the company that surrounds her; the rest are going on high behind the griffon, with sweeter song and more profound."[6] And if her speech was more diffuse I know not, because already in my eyes was she who from attending to aught else had closed me in. Alone she was sitting upon the bare ground, like a guard left there of the chariot which I had seen bound by the biform animal. In a circle the seven Nymphs were making of themselves an enclosure for her, with those lights in their hands that are secure from Aquilo and from Auster.[7]

[1] "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the suns." — The Song of Solomon, ii. 3.

[2] The full glory of Christ in Heaven.

[3] The marriage supper of the Lamb — Revelation, xix. 9.

[4] The transfiguration — Matthew, xvii. 1-8.

[5] Those of the dead called back to life by Jesus.

[6] Christ having ascended, Beatrice, this type of Theology, is left by the chariot, the type of the Church on earth.

[7] From the north wind or the south; that is, from any earthly blast.

"Here shalt thou be short time a forester; and thou shalt be with me without end a citizen of that Rome whereof Christ is a Roman. Therefore for profit of the world that lives ill, keep now thine eyes upon the chariot; amid what thou seest, having returned to earth, mind that thou write." Thus Beatrice; and I, who at the feet of her commands was all devout, gave my mind and my eyes where she willed.

Never with so swift a motion did fire descend from a dense cloud, when it is raining from that region which stretches most remote, as I saw the bird of Jove stoop downward through the tree, breaking the bark, as well as the flowers and new leaves; and he struck the chariot with all his force, whereat it reeled, like a ship in a tempest beaten by the waves now to starboard, now to larboard.[1] Then I saw leap into the body of the triumphal vehicle a she fox,[2] which seemed fasting from all good food; but rebuking her for her foul sins my Lady turned her to such flight as her fleshless bones allowed. Then, from there whence he had first come, I saw the eagle descend down into the ark of the chariot and leave it feathered from himself.[3] And a voice such as issues from a heart that is afflicted issued from Heaven, and thus spake, "O little bark of mine, how ill art thou laden!" Then it seemed to me that the earth opened between the two wheels, and I saw a dragon issue from it, which through the chariot upward fixed his tail: and, like a wasp that retracts its sting, drawing to himself his malign tail, drew out part of the bottom, and went wandering away.[4] That which remained covered itself again, as lively soil with grass, with the plumage, offered perhaps with

sane and benign intention; and both one and the other wheel and the pole were again covered with it in such time that a sigh holds the mouth open longer.[5] Thus transformed, the holy structure put forth heads upon its parts, three upon the pole, and one on each corner. The first were horned like oxen, but the four had a single horn upon the forehead.[6] A like prodigy was never seen before. Secure, as fortress on a high mountain, there appeared to me a loose harlot sitting upon it, with eyes roving around. And, as if in order that she should not be taken from him, I saw standing at her side a giant, and some while they kissed each other. But because she turned her lustful and wandering eye on me that fierce paramour scourged her from head to foot. Then full of jealousy, and cruel with anger, he loosed the monster, and drew it through the wood so far that only of that he made a shield from me for the harlot and for the strange beast.[7]

[1] The descent and the attack of the eagle symbolize the rejection of Christianity and the persecution of the Church by the emperors.

[2] The fox denotes the early heresies.

[3] The feathering of the car is the type of the donation of Constantine, — the temporal endowment of the Church.

[4] The dragging off by the dragon of a part of the car probably figures the schism of the Greek Church in the 9th century.

[5] This new feathering signifies the fresh and growing endowments of the Church.

[6] The seven heads have been interpreted as the seven mortal sins, which grew up in the transformed church, the result of its wealth and temporal power.

[7] The harlot and the giant stand respectively for the Pope (both Boniface VIII. and him successor Clement V.) and the kings of France, especially Philip the Fair. The turning of the eyes of the harlot upon Dante seems to signify the dealings of Boniface with the Italians, which awakened the jealousy of Philip; and the dragging of the car, transformed into a monster, through the wood, so far as to hide it from the poet, may be taken as typifying the removal of the seat of the Papacy from Rome to Avignon, in 1305.

CANTO XXXIII.

The Earthly Paradise. — Prophecy of Beatrice concerning one who shall restore the Empire. — Her discourse with Dante. — The river Eunoe. — Dante drinks of it, and is fit to ascend to Heaven.

"Deus, venerunt gentes,"[1] the ladies began, alternating, now three now four, a sweet psalmody, and weeping. And Beatrice, sighing and compassionate, was listening to them so moved that scarce more changed was Mary at the cross. But when the other virgins gave place to her to speak, risen upright upon her feet, she answered, colored like fire: "Modicum, et non videbitis me, et iterum, my beloved Sisters, Modicum, et vos videbitis me."[2] Then she set all the seven in front of her; and behind her, by a sign only, she placed me, and the Lady, and the Sage who had stayed.[3] So she moved on; and I do not think her tenth step had been set upon the ground, when with her eyes my eyes she smote, and with tranquil aspect said to me, "Come more quickly, so that if I speak with thee, to listen to me thou mayst be well placed." So soon as I was with her as I should be, she said to me, "Brother, why dost thou not venture to ask of me, now thou art coming with me?"

[1] Thus first words of the seventy-ninth Psalm: "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps." The whole Psalm, picturing the actual desolation of the Church, but closing with confident prayer to the Lord to restore his people, is sung by the holy ladies.

[2] "A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, A little while and ye shall see me." — John, xvi. 16. An answer and promise corresponding to the complaint and petition of the Psalm.

[3] The lady, Matilda, and the sage, Statius.

Even as befalls those who with excess of reverence are speaking in presence of their superiors, and drag not their voice living to the teeth,[1] it befell me that without perfect sound I began, "My Lady, you know my need, and that which is good for it." And site to me, "From fear and from shame I wish that thou henceforth divest thyself, so that thou speak no more like a man who dreams. Know thou, that the vessel which the serpent[2] broke was, and is not;[3] but let him who is to blame therefor believe that the vengeance of God fears not sops.[4] Not for all time shall be without an heir the eagle that left its feathers on the car, whereby it became a monster, and then a prey.[5] For I see surely, and therefore I tell it, stars already close at hand, secure from every obstacle and from every hindrance, to give to us a time in which a Five hundred, Ten, and Five sent by God[6] shall slay the thievish woman[7] and that giant who with her is delinquent. And perchance my narration, dark as Themis and the Sphinx,[8] less persuades thee, because after their fashion it clouds the understanding. But soon the facts

will be the Naiades[9] that shall solve this difficult enigma, without harm of flocks or of harvest. Do thou note; and even as they are borne from me, do thou so report these words to those alive with that life which is a running unto death; and have in mind when thou writest them, not to conceal what thou hast seen the plant, which now has been twice plundered here. Whoso robs that, or breaks it,[10] with blasphemy in act offends God, who only for His own use created it holy. For biting that, the first soul, in pain and in desire, five thousand years and more, longed for Him who punished on Himself the bite. Thy wit sleeps, if it deem not that for a special reason it is so high and so inverted at its top. And if thy vain thoughts had not been as water of Elsa[11] round about thy mind, and their pleasantness as Pyramus to the mulberry,[12] by so many circumstances only thou hadst recognized morally the justice of God in the interdict upon the tree. But since I see thee in thy understanding made of stone, and thus stony, dark, so that the light of my speech dazzles thee, I would yet that thou bear it hence within thee, — and if not written, at least depicted, — for the reason that the pilgrim's staff is carried wreathed with palm."[13] And I, "Even as by a seal wax which alters not the imprinted figure, is my brain now stamped by you. But why does your desired word fly so far above my sight, that the more it strives the more it loses it?" "In order that thou mayst know," she said, "that school which thou hast followed, and mayst see how its doctrine can follow my word [14] and mayst see your path distant so far from the divine, as the heaven which highest hastens is remote from earth." Whereon I replied to her, "I do not remember that I ever estranged myself from you, nor have I conscience of it that may sting me." "And if thou canst not remember it," smiling she replied, "now bethink thee how this day thou hast drunk of Lethe. And if from smoke fire be inferred, such oblivion clearly proves fault in thy will elsewhere intent.[15] Truly my words shall henceforth be naked so far as it shall be befitting to uncover them to thy rude sight."

[1] Are unable to speak with distinct words.

[2] The dragon.

[3] "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not." — Revelation, xvii. 8.

[4] According to a belief, which the old commentators report as commonly held by the Florentines, if a murderer could contrive within nine days of the murder to eat a sop of bread dipped in wine, above the grave of his victim, he would escape from the vengeance of the family of the murdered man.

[5] The meaning is that an Emperor shall come, who shall restore the Church from its captivity, and reestablish the Divine order upon earth, in rise mutually dependent and severally independent authority of Church and Empire.

[6] This prophecy is too obscure to admit of a sure interpretation. Five hundred, ten, and five, in Roman numerals, give the letters D X V; which by transposition form the word Dux, a leader.

[7] The harlot, who had no right in the car, but had stolen her place there, or, in plain words, the Popes who by corruption had secured this papal throne.

[8] Obscure as the oracles of Thiemis or the enigmas of the Sphinx.

[9] According to a misreading of a verse in Ovid's Metam., vii. 759, the Naiades solved the riddles of the oracles, at which Themis, offended, sent forth a wild beast to ravage the flocks and fields.

[10] Robs it as Adam did, splinters it as the Emperors did.

[11] A river of Tuscany, whose waters have a petrifying quality.

[12] Darkening thy mind as the blood of Pyramus dyed the mulberry.

[13] If not clearly inscribed, at least so imprinted on the mind, that, like the palm on the pilgrim's staff, it may be a sign of where thou hast been and of what thou hast seen.

[14] How far its doctrine is from my teaching.

[15] The having been obliged to drink of Lethe is the proof that thou hadst sin to he forgotten, and that thy will had turned thee to other things than me.

And more coruscant, and with slower steps, the sun was holding the circle of the meridian, which is set here or there according to the aspect,[1] when even as he, who goes before a troop as guide, stops if he find some strange thing on his track, the seven ladies stopped at the edge of a pale shade, such as beneath green leaves and black boughs the Alp casts over its cold streams. In front of them, it seemed to me I saw Euphrates and Tigris issue from one fountain, and, like friends, part slow from one another.

[1] Which shifts as seen from one place or another.

"O light, O glory of the human race, what water is this which here spreads from one source, and from itself withdraws itself?" To this prayer it was said to me, "Pray Matilda[1] that she tell it to thee;" and here the beautiful Lady answered, as one does who frees himself from blame, "This and other things have been told him by me; and I am sure that the water of Lethe has not hidden them from him." And Beatrice, "Perhaps a greater care which oftentimes deprives the memory has darkened the eyes of his mind. But see Eunoe,[2] which flows forth yonder, lead him to it, and, as thou art accustomed, revive his extinct power." As a gentle soul which makes not excuse, but makes its own will of another's will, soon as by a sign it is outwardly disclosed, even so, when I was taken by her, the beautiful Lady moved on, and to Statius said, with manner of a lady, "Come with him."

[1] Here for the first and only time is the beautiful Lady called by name.

[2] Eunoe, "the memory of good," which its waters restore to the purified soul. The poetic conception of this fair stream is exclusively Dante's own.

If I had, Reader, longer space for writing I would yet partly sing the sweet draught which never would have sated me. But, because all the leaves destined for this second canticle are full, the curb of my art lets me go no further. I returned from the most holy wave, renovated as new plants renewed with new foliage, pure and disposed to mount unto the stars.

PARADISE

CANTO I.

Proem. — Invocation. — Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Sphere of Fire. — Beatrice explains the cause of their ascent.

The glory of Him who moves everything penetrates through the universe, and shines in one part more and in another less. In the heaven that receives most of its light I have been, and have seen things which he who descends from thereabove neither knows how nor is able to recount; because, drawing near to its own desire,[1] our understanding enters so deep, that the memory cannot follow. Truly whatever of the Holy Realm I could treasure up in my mind shall now be the theme of my song.

[1] The innate desire of the soul is to attain the vision of God.

O good Apollo, for this last labor make me such a vessel of thy power as thou demandest for the gift of the loved laurel.[1] Thus far one summit of Parnassus has been enough for me, but now with both[2] I need to enter the remaining, arena. Enter into my breast, and breathe thou in such wise as when thou drewest Marsyas from out the sheath of his limbs. O divine Power, if thou lend thyself to me so that I may make manifest the image of the Blessed Realm imprinted within my head, thou shalt see me come to thy chosen tree, and crown myself then with those leaves of which the theme and thou will make me worthy. So rarely, Father, are they gathered for triumph or of Caesar or of poet (fault and shame of the human wills), that the Peneian leaf[3] should bring forth joy unto the joyous Delphic deity, whenever it makes any one to long for it. Great flame follows a little spark: perhaps after me prayer shall be made with better voices, whereto Cyrrha[4] may respond.

[1] So inspire me in this labor that I may deserve the gift of the laurel.

[2] The Muses were fabled to dwell on one peak of Parnassus, Apollo on the other. At the opening of the preceding parts of his poem Dante has invoked the Muses only.

[3] Daphne, who was changed to the laurel, was the daughter of Peneus.

[4] Cyrrha, a city sacred to Apollo, not far from the foot of Parnassus, and here used for the name of the god himself.

The lamp of the world rises to mortals through different passages, but from that which joins four circles with three crosses it issues with better course and conjoined with a better star, and it tempers and seals the mundane wax more after its own fashion[1] Almost such a passage had made morning there and evening here;[2] and there all that hemisphere was white, and the other part black, when I saw Beatrice turned upon the left side, and looking into the sun: never

did eagle so fix himself upon it. And even as a second ray is wont to issue from the first, and mount upward again, like a pilgrim who wishes to return; thus of her action, infused through the eyes into my imagination, mine was made, and I fixed my eyes upon the sun beyond our use. Much is allowed there which here is not allowed to our faculties, thanks to the place made for the human race as its proper, abode.[3] Not long did I endure it, nor so little that I did not see it sparkling round about, like iron that issues boiling from the fire. And on a sudden,[4] day seemed to be added to day, as if He who is able had adorned the heaven with another sun.

[1] In the spring the sun rises from a point on the horizon, where the four great circles, namely, the horizon, the zodiac, theequator, and the equinoctial colure, meet, and, cutting each other, form three crosses. The sun is in the sign of Aries, “a better star,” because the influence of this constellation was supposed to be benignant, and under it the earth reclothes itself. It was the season assigned to the Creation, and to the Annunciation.

[2] There, in the Earthly Paradise; here, on earth. It is the morning of Thursday, April 123. The hours from the mid-day preceding to this dawn are undescribed.

[3] The Earthly Paradise, made for man in his original excellence.

[4] So rapid was his ascent to the sphere of fire, drawn upward by the eyes of Beatrice.

Beatrice was standing with her eyes wholly fixed on the eternal wheels, and on her I fixed my eyes from thereabove removed. Looking at her I inwardly became such as Glaucus[1] became on tasting of the herb which made him consort in the sea of the other gods. Transhumanizing cannot be signified in words; therefore let the example[2] suffice for him to whom grace reserves experience. If I was only what of me thou didst the last create,[3] O Love that governest the heavens, Thou knowest, who with Thy light didst lift me. When the revolution which Thou, being desired, makest eternal,[4] made me attent unto itself with the harmony which Thou attunest and modulatest, so much of the heaven then seemed to me enkindled by the flame of the sun, that rain or river never made so broad a lake.

[1] A fisherman changed to a sea-god. The story is in Ovid (Metamorphoses, xiii.).

[2] Just cited, of Glauens.

[3] In the twenty-fifth Canto of Purgatory, Dante has said that when the articulation of the brain is perfect God breathes into it a new spirit, the living soul; and he means here that, like St. Paul caught up into Paradise, he cannot tell “whether in the body or Out of the body.” (2 Corinthians, xii. 3).

[4] The desire to be united with God is the source of the eternal revolution of the heavens. “The Empyrean . . . is the cause of the most swift motion of the Primum Mobile. because of the most ardent desire of every part of the latter to be conjoined with every part of that most divine quiet heaven.” — Convito, 14.

The novelty of the sound and the great light kindled in me a desire concerning their cause, never before felt with such acuteness. Whereupon she, who saw me as I see myself, to quiet my perturbed mind opened her mouth, ere I mine to ask,

and began, “Thou thyself makest thyself dull with false imagining, so that thou seest not what thou wouldst see, if thou hadst shaken it off. Thou art not on earth, as thou believest; but lightning, flying from its proper site, never ran as thou who thereunto[1] returnest.”

[1] To thine own proper site, — Heaven, the true home of the soul.

If I was divested of my first doubt by these brief little smiled-out words, within a new one was I the more enmeshed. And I said, “Already I rested content concerning a great wonder; but now I wonder how I can transcend these light bodies.” Whereupon she, after a pitying sigh, directed her eyes toward me, with that look which a mother turns on her delirious son, and she began, “All things whatsoever have order among themselves; and this is the form which makes the universe like to God. Here[1] the high creatures[2] see the imprint of the eternal Goodness, which is the end for which the aforesaid rule is made. In the order of which I speak, all natures are arranged, by diverse lots, more or less near to their source;[3] wherefore they are moved to diverse ports through the great sea of being, and each one with an instinct given to it which may bear it on. This bears the fire upward toward the moon; this is the motive force in mortal hearts; this binds together and unites the earth. Nor does this bow shoot forth.[4] Only the created things which are outside intelligence, but also those which have understanding and love. The Providence that adjusts all this, with its own light makes forever quiet the heaven[5] within which that revolves which hath the greatest speed. And thither now, as to a site decreed, the virtue of that cord bears us on which directs to a joyful mark whatever it shoots. True is it, that as the form often accords not to the intention of the art, because the material is deaf to respond, so the creature sometimes deviates from this course; for it has power, though thus impelled, to incline in another direction (even as the fire of a cloud may be seen to fall[6]), if the first impetus, bent aside by false pleasure, turn it earthwards. Thou shouldst not, if I deem aright, wonder more at thy ascent, than at a stream if from a high mountain it descends to the base. A marvel it would be in thee, if, deprived of hindrance, thou hadst sat below, even as quiet in living fire on earth would be.”

[1] In this order of the universe.

[2] The created beings endowed with souls, — angels and men.

[3] The source of their being, God.

[4] This instinct directs to their proper end animate as well as inanimate things, as the bow shoots the arrow to its mark.

[5] The Empyrean, within which the Primum Mobile, the first moving heaven, revolves.

[6] Contrary to its true nature.

Thereon she turned again toward heaven her face.

CANTO II.

Proem. — Ascent to the Moon. — The cause of Spots on the Moon. — Influence of the Heavens.

O ye, who are in a little bark, desirous to listen, following behind my craft which singing passes on, turn to see again Your shores; put not out upon the deep; for haply losing me, ye would remain astray. The water that I sail was never crossed. Minerva inspires, and Apollo guides me, and nine Muses point out to me the Bears.

Ye other few, who have lifted tip your necks be. times to the bread of the Angels, oil which one here subsists, but never becomes sated of it, ye may well put forth your vessel over the salt deep, keeping my wake before you on the water which turns smooth again. Those glorious ones who passed over to Colchos wondered not as ye shall do, when they saw Jason become a ploughman.

The concreate and perpetual thirst for the deiform realm was bearing us on swift almost as ye see the heavens. Beatrice was looking upward, and I upon her, and perhaps in such time as a quarrel[1] rests, and flies, and from the notch is unlocked,[2] I saw myself arrived where a wonderful thing drew my sight to itself; and therefore she, from whom the working of my mind could not be hid, turned toward me, glad as beautiful. “Uplift thy grateful mind to God,” she said to me, “who with the first star[3] has conjoined us.”

[1] The bolt for a cross-bow.

[2] The inverse order indicates the instantaneousness of the act.

[3] The moon.

It seemed to me that a cloud had covered us, lucid, dense, solid, and polished, like a diamond which the sun had struck. Within itself the eternal pearl had received us, even as water receives a ray of light, remaining unbroken. If I was body (and here[1] it is not conceivable how one dimension brooked another, which needs must be if body enter body) the desire ought the more to kindle us to see that Essence, in which is seen how our nature and God were united. There will be seen that which we hold by faith, not demonstrated, but it will be known of itself like the first truth which man believes.[2]

[1] On earth, by mortal faculties.

[2] Not demonstrated by argument, but known by direct cognition, like the intuitive perception of first principles, per se notu.

I replied, “My Lady, devoutly to the utmost that I can, do I thank him who from the mortal world has removed me. But tell me what are the dusky marks of this body, which there below on earth make people fable about Cain?”[1]

[1] Fancying the dark spaces on the surface of the moon to represent Cain carrying a thorn-bush for the fire of his sacrifice.

She smiled somewhat, and then she said, “If the opinion of mortals errs where the key of sense unlocks not, surely the shafts of wonder ought not now to pierce thee, since thou seest that the reason following the senses has short wings. But tell me what thou thyself thinkest of it.” And I, “That which here above appears to us diverse, I believe is caused by rare and dense bodies.” And she, “Surely enough thou shalt see that thy belief is submerged in error, if then listenest well to the argument that I shall make against it. The eighth sphere[1] displays to you many lights, which may be noted of different aspects in quality and quantity. If rare and dense effected all this,[2] one single virtue, more or less or equally distributed, would be in all. Different virtues must needs be fruits of formal principles;[3] and by thy reckoning, these, all but one, would be destroyed. Further, if rarity were the cause of that darkness of which you ask, either this planet would be thus deficient of its matter through and through, or else as a body distributes the fat and the loan, so this would interchange the leaves in its volume. If the first were the case, it would be manifest in the eclipses of the sun, by the shining through of the light, as when it is poured out upon any other rare body. This is not so; therefore we must look at the other, and if it happen that I quash this other, thy opinion will be falsified. If it be that this rare passes not through,[4] there needs must be a limit, beyond which its contrary allows it not to pass further; and thence the ray from another body is poured back, just as color returns through a glass which hides lead behind itself. Now thou wilt say that the ray shows itself dimmer there than in the other parts, by being there reflected from further back. From this objection experiment, which is wont to be the fountain to the streams of your arts, may deliver thee, if ever thou try it. Thou shalt take three mirrors, and set two of them at an equal distance from thee, and let the other, further removed, meet thine eyes between the first two. Turning toward them, cause a light to be placed behind thy back, which may illumine the three mirrors, and return to thee thrown back front all. Although the more distant image reach thee not so great in quantity, thou wilt then see how it cannot but be of equal brightness.

[1] The heaven of the fixed stars.

[2] If all this difference were caused merely by difference in rarity and density.

[3] The stars exert various influences; hence their differences, from which the variety of their influence proceeds, must be caused by different formal principles or intrinsic causes.

[4] Extends not through the whole substance of the moon.

"Now, as beneath the blows of the warm rays that which lies under the snow remains bare both of the former color[1] and the cold, thee, thus remaining in thy intellect, will I inform with light so living that it shall tremble in its aspect to thee.[2]

[1] The color of the snow.

[2[My argument has removed the error which covered thy mind, and nov I will tell thee the true cause of the variety in the surface of the moon.

"Within the heaven of the divine peace revolves a body, in whose virtue lies the being of all that it contains.[1] The following heaven[2] which has so many sights, distributes that being through divers essences[3] from it distinct, and by it contained. The other spheres, by various differences, dispose the distinctions which they have within themselves unto their ends and their seeds.[4] These organs of the world thus proceed, as thou now seest, from grade to grade; for they receivefrom above, and operate below. Observe me well, how I advance through this place to the truth which thou desirest, so that hereafter thou mayest know to keep the ford alone. The motion and the virtue of the holy spheres must needs be inspired by blessed motors, as the work of the hammer by the smith. And the heaven, which so many lights make beautiful, takes its image from the deep Mind which revolves it, and makes thereof a seal. And as the soul within your dust is diffused through different members, and conformed to divers potencies, so the Intelligence[5] displays its own goodness multiplied through the stars, itself circling upon its own unity. Divers virtue makes divers alloy with the precious body that it quickens, in which, even as life in you, it is bound. Because of the glad nature whence, it flows, the virtue mingled through the body shines,[6] as gladness through the living pupil. From this,[7] comes whatso seems different between light and light, not from dense and rare; this is the formal principle which produces, conformed unto its goodness, the dark and the bright."

[1] Within the motionless sphere of the Empyrean revolves that of the Primum Mobile, from whose virtue, communicated to it from the Empyrean, all the inferior spheres contained within it derive their special mode of being.

[2] The heaven of the Fixed Stars.

[3] Through the planets, called essences because each has a specific mode of being.

[4] "The rays of the heavens are the way by which their virtue descends to the things below." — Convito, ii. 7.

[5] Which moves the heavens.

[6] The brightness of the stars comes from the joy which radiates through them.

[7] From the divers virtue making divers alloy.

CANTO III.

The Heaven of the Moon. — Spirits whose vows had been broken. — Piccarda Donati. — The Empress Constance.

That sun which first had heated my breast with love, proving and refuting, had uncovered to me the sweet aspect of fair truth; and I, in order to confess myself corrected and assured so far as was needful, raised my head more erect to speak. But a vision appeared which held me to itself so close in order to be seen, that of my confession I remembered not.

As through transparent and polished glasses, or through clear and tranquil waters, not so deep that their bed be lost, the lineaments of our faces return so feebly that a pearl on a white brow comes not less readily to our eyes, so I saw many faces eager to speak; wherefore I ran into the error contrary to that which kindled love between the man and the fountain.[1] Suddenly, even as I became aware of them, supposing them mirrored semblances, I turned my eyes to see of whom they were; and I saw nothing; and I turned them forward again, straight into the light of the sweet guide who, smiling, was glowing in her holy eyes. "Wonder not because I smile," she said to me, "at thy puerile thought, since thy foot trusts itself not yet upon the truth, but turns thee, as it is wont, to emptiness. True substances are these which thou seest, here relegated through failure in their vows. Therefore speak with them, and hear, and believe; for the veracious light which satisfies them allows them not to turn their feet from itself."

[1] Narcissus conceived the image to be a true face; Dante takes the real faces to be mirrored semblances.

And I directed me to the shade that seemed most eager to speak, and I began, even like a man whom too strong wish confuses, "O well-created spirit, who in the rays of life eternal tastest the sweetness, which untasted never is understood, it will be gracious to me, if thou contentest me with thy name, and with your destiny." Whereon she promptly, and with smiling eyes, "Our charity locks not its door to a just wish, more than that which wills that all its court be like itself. I was in the world a virgin sister,[1] and if thy mind well regards, my being more beautiful will not conceal me from thee; but thou wilt recognize that I am Piccarda,[2] who, placed here with these other blessed Ones, am blessed in the slowest sphere. Our affections, which are inflamed only in the pleasure of the Holy Spirit, rejoice in being formed according to His order;[3] and this allotment, which appears so low, is forsooth given to us, because our vows were neglected or void in some part." Whereon I to her, In your marvellous aspects there shines I know not what divine which transmutes you from our first conceptions;

therefore I was not swift in remembering; but now that which you say to me assists me, so that refiguring is plainer to me. But tell me, ye who are happy here, do ye desire a highher place, in order to see more, or to make yourselves more friends?" With those other shades she first smiled a little; then answered me so glad, that she seemed to burn in the first fire of love, "Brother, virtue of charity[4] quiets our will, and makes us wish only for that which we have, and for aught else makes us not thirsty. Should we desire to be higher up, our desires would be discordant with the will of Him who assigns us to this place, which thou wilt see is not possible in these circles, if to be in charity is here necesse,[5] and if its nature thou dost well consider. Nay, it is essential to this blessed existence to hold ourselves within the divine will, whereby our very wills are made one. So that as we are, from stage to stage throughout this realm, to all the realm is pleasing, as to the King who inwills us with His will. And His will is our peace; it is that sea whereunto is moving all that which It creates and which nature makes."

[1] A nun, of the order of St. Clare.

[2] The sister of Corso Donati and of Forese: see Purgatory, Canto XXIII. It may not be without intention that the first blessed spirit whom Dante sees in Paradise is a relative of his own wife, Gemma dei Donati.

[3] Rejoice in whatever grade of bliss is assigned to thern in that order of the universe which is the form that makes it like unto God.

[4] Charity here means love, the love of God.

[5] Of necessity; the Latin word being used for the rhyme's sake. "Mansionem Deus haber non potest ubi charitas non est" B. Alberti Magni, De adhoerendo Deo, c. xii.

Clear was it then to me, how everywhere in Heaven is Paradise, although the grace of the Supreme Good rains not there in one measure.

But even as it happen, if one food sates, and for another the appetite still remains, that this is asked for, and that declined with thanks; so did I, with gesture and with speech, to learn from her, what was the web whereof she did not draw the shuttle to the head.[1] "Perfect life and high merit in-heaven a lady higher up," she said to me, "according to whose rule, in your world below, there are who vest and veil themselves, so that till death they may wake and sleep with that Spouse who accepts every vow which love conforms unto His pleasure. A young girl, I fled from the world to follow her, and in her garb I shut myself, and pledged me to the pathway of her order. Afterward men, more used to ill than good, dragged me forth from the sweet cloister;[2] and God knows what then my life became. And this other splendor, which shows itself to thee at my right side, and which glows with all the light of our sphere, that which I say of me understands of herself.[3] A sister was she; and in like manner from her head the shadow of the sacred veils was taken. But after she too was returned unto the

world against her liking and against good usage, from the veil of the heart she was never unbound.[4] This is the light of the great Constance,[5] who from the second wind of Swabia produced the third and the last power."

[1] To learn from her what was the vow which she did not fulfil.

[2] According to the old commentators, her brother Corso forced Piccarda by violence to leave the convent, in order to make a marriage which he desired for her.

[3] Her experience was similar to that of Piccarda.

[4] She remained a nun at heart.

[5] Constance, daughter of the king of Sicily, Roger 1.; married, in 1186, to the Emperor, Henry VI., the son of Frederick Barbarossa, and father of Frederick II, who died in 1250, the last Emperor of his line.

Thus she spoke to me, and then began singing "Ave Maria," and Singing vanished, like a heavy thing through deep water. My sight, that followed her so far as was possible, after it lost her turned to the mark of greater desire, and wholly rendered itself to Beatrice; but she so flashed upon my gaze that at first the sight endured it not: and this made me more slow in questioning.

CANTO IV.

Doubts of Dante, respecting the justice of Heaven and the abode of the blessed, solved by Beatrice. — Question of Dante as to the possibility of reparation for broken vows.

Between two viands, distant and attractive in like measure, a free man would die of hunger, before he would bring one of them to his teeth. Thus a lamb would stand between two ravenings of fierce wolves, fearing equally; thus would stand a dog between two does. Hence if, urged by my doubts in like measure, I was silent, I blame not myself; nor, since it was necessary, do I commend.

I was silent, but my desire was depicted on my face, and the questioning with that far more fervent than by distinct speech. Beatrice did what Daniel did, delivering Nebuchadnezzar from anger, which had made him unjustly cruel, and said, “I see clearly how one and the other desire draws thee, so that thy care so binds itself that it breathes not forth. Thou reasonest, ‘If the good will endure, by what reckoning doth the violence of others lessen for me the measure of desert?’ Further, it gives thee occasion for doubt, that the souls appear to return to the stars, in accordance with the opinion of Plato.[1] These are the questions that thrust equally upon thy wish; and therefore I will treat first of that which hath the most venom.[2]

[1] Plato, in his Timaeus (41, 42), says that the creator of the universe assigned each soul to a star, whence they were to be sown in the vessels of time. “ He who lived well during his appointed time was to return to the star which was his habitation, and there he would have a blessed and suitable existence.” Dante’s doubt has arisen from the words of Piccarda, which implied that her station was in the sphere of the Moon.

[2] The conception that the souls after death had their abode in the stars would be a definite heresy, and hence far more dangerous than a question concerning the justice of Heaven, for such a question might be consistent with entire faith in that justice.

“Of the Seraphim he who is most in God, Moses, Samuel, and whichever John thou wilt take, I say, and even Mary, have not their seats in another heaven than those spirits who just now appeared to thee, nor have they more or fewer years for their existence; but all make beautiful the first circle, and have sweet life in different measure, through feeling more or less the eternal breath.[1] They showed themselves here, not because this sphere is allotted to them, but to afford sign of the celestial condition which is least exalted. To speak thus is befitting to your mind, since only by objects of the sense doth it apprehend that which it then makes worthy of the understanding. For this reason the Scripture condescends to your capacity, and attributes feet and hands to God, while meaning otherwise; and Holy Church represents to you with human aspect Gabriel and Michael and the other who made Tobias whole again.[2] That which Timaeus, reasons of the souls is not like this which is seen here, since it seems that he thinks as he says.

He says that the soul returns to its own star, believing it to have been severed thence, when nature gave it as the form.[3] And perchance his opinion is of other guise than his words sound, and may be of a meaning not to be derided. If he means that the honor of their influence and the blame returns to these wheels, perhaps his bow hits on some truth. This principle, ill understood, formerly turned awry almost the whole world, so that it ran astray in naming Jove, Mercury, and Mars.[4]

[1] The abode of all the blessed is the Empyrean, — the first circle, counting from above; but there are degrees in blessedness, each spirit enjoying according to its capacity; no one is conscious of any lack.

[2] The archangel Raphael.

[3] The intellectual soul is united with the body as its substantial form. That by means of which anything performs its functions (operatur) is its form. The soul is that by which the body lives, and hence is its form. — Summa Theol., I. lxxvi. 1, 6, 7.

[4] The belief in the influence of the stars led men to assign to them divine powers, and to name their gods after them.

The other dubitation which disturbs thee has less venom, for its malice could not lead thee from me elsewhere. That our justice seems unjust in the eyes of mortals is argument of faith,[1] and not of heretical iniquity. But in order that your perception may surely penetrate unto this truth, I will make thee content, as thou desirest. Though there be violence when he who suffers nowise consents to him who compels, these souls were not by reason of that excused; for will, unless it wills, is not quenched,[2] but does as nature does in fire, though violence a thousand times may wrest it. Wherefore if it bend much or little, it follows the force; and thus these did, having power to return to the holy place. If their will had been entire, such as held Lawrence on the gridiron, and made Mucius severe unto his hand, it would have urged them back, so soon as they were loosed, along the road on which they had been dragged; but will so firm is too rare. And by these words, if thou hast gathered them up as thou shouldst, is the argument quashed that would have given thee annoy yet many times.

[1] Mortals would not trouble themselves concerning the justice of God, unless they had faith in it. These perplexities are then arguments or proofs of faith; as St. Thomas Aquinas says, “The merit of faith consists in believing what one does not see.” But in this case, as Beatrice goes on to show, mere human intelligence if Sufficient to see that the injustice is only apparent.

[2] Violence has no power over the will; the original will may, however, by act of will, be changed.

“But now another path runs traverse before thine eyes, such that by thyself thou wouldst not issue forth therefrom ere thou wert weary. I have put it in thy mind for certain, that a soul in bliss cannot lie, since it is always near to the Primal Truth; and then thou hast heard from Piccarda that Constance retained affection for the veil; so that she seems in this to contradict me. Often ere now, brother, has it happened that, in order to escape peril, that which it was not meet to do has been done against one’s liking; even as Alcmaeon (who thereto

entreated by his father, slew his own mother), not to lose piety, pitiless became. On this point, I wish thee to think that the violence is mingled with the will, and they so act that the offences cannot be excused. Absolute will consents not to the wrong; but the will in so far consents thereto, as it fears, if it draw back, to fall into greater trouble. Therefore when Piccarda says that, she means it of the absolute will; and I of the other so that we both speak truth alike."

Such was the current of the holy stream which issued from the fount whence every truth flows forth; and such it set at rest one and the other desire.

"O beloved of the First Lover, O divine one," said I then, "whose speech inundates me, and warms me so that more and more it quickens me, my affection is not so profound that it can suffice to render to you grace for grace, but may He who sees and can, respond for this. I clearly see that our intellect is never satisfied unless the Truth illume it, outside of which no truth extends. In that it reposes, as a wild beast in his lair, soon as it has reached it: and it can reach it; otherwise every desire would be in vain. Because of this,[1] the doubt, in likeness of a shoot, springs up at the foot of the truth; and it is nature which urges us to the summit from height to height. This[2] invites me, this gives me assurance, Lady, with reverence to ask you of another truth which is obscure to me. I wish to know if man can make satisfaction to you[3] for defective vows with other goods, so that in your scales they may not be light?" looked at we with such divine eyes, full of the sparks of love, that my power, vanquished, turned its back, and almost I lost myself with eyes cast down.

[1] Of this constant desire for truth.

[2] This natural impulse.

[3] To you, that is, to the court of Heaven.

CANTO V.

The sanctity of vows, and the seriousness with which they are to be made or changed. — Ascent to the Heaven of Mercury. — The shade of Justinian.

"If I flame upon thee in the heat of love, beyond the fashion that on earth is seen, go that I vanquish the valor of thine eyes, marvel not, for it proceeds from perfect vision,[1] which according as it apprehends, so moves its feet to the apprehended good. I see clearly how already shines in thy intellect the eternal light, which, being seen, alone ever enkindles love. And if any other thing seduce your love, it is naught but some vestige of that, illrecognized, which therein shines through. Thou wishest to know if for a defective vow so much can be rendered with other service as may secure the soul from suit."

[1] From the brightness of my eyes illuminated by the divine light.

Thus Beatrice began this canto, and even as one who breaks not off his speech, she thus continued her holy discourse. "The greatest gift which God in His largess bestowed in creating, and the most conformed unto His goodness and that which He esteems the most, was the freedom of the will, with which all the creatures of intelligence, and they alone, were and are endowed. Now will appear to thee, if from this thou reasonest, the high worth of the vow, if it be such that God consent when thou consentest;[1] for, in closing the compact between God and man, sacrifice is made of this treasure, which is such as I say, and it is made by its own act. What then can be rendered in compensation? If thou thinkest to make good use of that which thou hast offered, with illgotten gain thou wouldst do good work.[2]

[1] If the vow be valid through its acceptance by God.

[2] The intent to put what had been vowed to another (though good) use, affords no excuse for breaking a vow.

"Thou art now assured of the greater point; but since Holy Church in this gives dispensation, which seems contrary to the truth which I have disclosed to thee, it behoves thee still to sit a little at table, because the tough food which thou hast taken requires still some aid for thy digestion. Open thy mind to that which I reveal to thee, and enclose it therewithin; for to have heard without retaining doth not make knowledge.

"Two things combine in the essence of this sacrifice; the one is that of which it consists, the other is the covenant. This last is never cancelled if it be not kept; and concerning this has my preceding speech been so precise. On this account it was necessary for the Hebrews still to make offering, although some part of the

offering might be changed, as thou shouldst know.[1] The other, which as the matter[2] is known to thee, may truly be such that one errs not if for some other matter it be changed. But let not any one shift the load upon his shoulder at his own will, without the turning both of the white and of the yellow key.[3] And let him deem every permutation foolish, if the thing laid down be not included in the thing taken up, as four in six.[4] Therefore whatever thing is, through its own worth, of such great weight that it can draw down every balance, cannot be made good with other spending.

[1] See Leviticus, xxvii., in respect to commutation allowed.

[2] That is, as the subject matter of the vow, the thing of which sacrifice is made.

[3] Without the turning of the keys of St. Peter, that is, without clerical dispensation; the key of gold signifying authority, that of silver, knowledge. Cf. Purgatory, Canto IX.

[4] The matter substituted must exceed in worth that of the original vow, but not necessarily in a definite proportion.

"Let not mortals take a vow in jest; be faithful, and not squint-eyed in doing this, as Jephthah was in his first. offering;[1] to whom it better behoved to say, 'I have done ill,' than, by keeping his vow, to do worse. And thou mayest find the great leader of the Greeks in like manner foolish; wherefore Iphigenia wept for her fair face, and made weep for her both the simple and the wise, who heard speak of such like observance. Be, ye Christians, more grave in moving; be not like a feather on every wind, and think not that every water can wash you. Ye have the Old and the New Testament, and the Shepherd of the Church, who guides you; let this suffice you for your salvation. If evil covetousness cry aught else to you, be ye men, and not silly sheep, so that the Jew among you may not laugh at you. Act not like the lamb, that leaves the milk of his mother, and, simple and wanton, at its own pleasure combats with itself."

[1] See Judges, xi.

Thus Beatrice to me, even as I write; then all desireful turned herself again to that region where the world is most alive.[1] Her silence, and her transmuted countenance imposed silence on my eager mind, which already had new questions in advance. And even as an arrow, that hits the mark before the bowstring is quiet, so we ran into the second realm.[2] Here I saw my lady so joyous as she entered into the light of that heaven, that thereby the planet became more lucent. And if the star war, changed and smiled, what did I become, who even by my nature am transmutable in every wise!

[1] Looking upward, toward the Empyrean.

[2] The Heaven of Mercury, where blessed spirits who have been active in the pursuit of honor and fame show themselves.

As in a fishpond, which is tranquil and pure, the fish draw to that which comes from without in such manner that they deem. it their food, so indeed I saw more than a thousand splendors drawing toward. us, and in each one was heard, — “Lo, one who shall increase our loves!”[1] And as each came to us, the shade was seen full of joy in the bright effulgence that issued from it.

[1] By giving us occasion to manifest our love.

Think, Reader, if that which is here begun should not proceed, how thou wouldst have distressful want of knowing more; and by thyself thou wilt see how desirous I was to hear from these of their conditions, as they became manifest to mine eyes. “O well-born,[1] to whom Grace concedes to see the thrones of the eternal triumph ere the warfare is abandoned,[2] with the light which spreads through the whole heaven we are enkindled, and therefore if thou desirest to make thyself clear concerning us, at thine own pleasure sate thyself.” Thus was said to me by one of those pious spirits; and by Beatrice, “Speak, speak securely, and trust even as to gods.” “I see clearly, how thou dost nest thyself in thine ownlight, and that by thine eyes thou drawest it, because they sparkle when thou smilest; but I know not who thou art, nor why thou hast, O worthy soul, thy station in the sphere which is veiled to mortals by another’s rays.”[3] This I said, addressed unto the light which first had spoken to me; whereon it became more lucent far than it had been. Even as the sun, which, when the heat has consumed the tempering of dense vapors, conceals itself by excess of light, so, through greater joy, the holy shape bid itself from me within its own radiance, and thus close enclosed, it answered me in the fashion that the following canto sings.

[1] That is, born to good, to attain blessedness.

[2] Ere thy life on earth, as a member of the Church Militant, is ended.

[3] Mercury is veiled by the Sun.

CANTO VI.

Justinian tells of his own life. — The story of the Roman Eagle. — Spirits in the planet Mercury. — Romeo.

After Constantine turned the Eagle counter to the course of the heavens which it had followed behind the ancient who took to wife Lavinia,[1] a hundred and a hundred years and more[2] the bird of God held itself on the verge of Europe, near to the Mountains[3] from which it first came forth, and there governed the world beneath the shadow of the sacred wings, from hand to hand, and thus changing, unto mine own arrived. Caesar I was,[4] and am Justinian, who, through will of the primal Love which I feel, drew out from among the laws what was superfluous and vain.[5] And before I was intent on this work, I believed one nature to be in Christ, not more,[6] and with such faith was content. But the blessed Agapetus, who was the supreme pastor, directed me to the pure faith with his words. I believed him; and that which was in his faith I now see clearly, even as thou seest every contradiction to be both false and true.[7] Soon as with the Church I moved my feet, it pleased God, through grace, to inspire me with the high labor, and I gave myself wholly to it. And I entrusted my armies to my Belisarius, to whom the right hand of Heaven was so joined that it was a sign that I should take repose.

[1] Constantine, transferring the seat of Empire from Rome to Byzantium, carried the Eagle from West to East, counter to the course along which Aeneas had borne it when he went from Troy to found the Roman Empire.

[2] From A. D. 324, when the transfer was begun, to 527, when Justinian became Emperor.

[3] Of the Troad, opposite Byzantium.

[4] On earth Emperor, but in Heaven earthly dignities exist no longer.

[5] The allusion is to Justinian's codification of the Roman Law.

[6] The divine nature only. Dante here follows Brunetto Latini (Li Tresor, I. ii. 87) in an historical error.

[7] Of the two terms of a contradictory proposition one is true, the other false.

"Now here to the first question my answer comes to the stop; but its nature constrains me to add a sequel to it, in order that thou mayst see with how much reason[1] move against the ensign sacrosanct, both he who appropriates it to himself,[2] and he who opposes himself to it.[3] See how great virtue has made it worthy of reverence," and he began from the hour when Pallas[4] died to give it a kingdom. "Thou knowest it made in Alba its abode for three hundred years and move, till at the end the three fought with the three[4] for its sake still. And thou knowest what it did, from the wrong of the Sabine women clown to the sorrow of Lucretia, in seven kings, conquering the neighboring peoples round about.

Thou knowest what it did when borne by the illustrious Romans against Brennus, against Pyrrhus, and against the other chiefs and allies; whereby Torquatus, and Quinctius who was named from his neglected locks, the Decii and the Fabii acquired the fame which willingly I embalm. It struck to earth the pride of the Arabs, who, following Hannibal, passed the Alpine rocks from which thou, Po, glidest. Beneath it, in their youth, Scipio and Pompey triumphed, and to that hill beneath which thou wast born, it seemed bitter.[5] Then, near the time when all Heaven willed to bring the world to its own serene mood, Caesar by the will of Rome took it: and what it did from the Var even to the Rhine, the Isere beheld, and the Saone, and the Seine beheld, and every valley whence the Rhone is filled. What afterward it did when it came forth from Ravenna, and leaped the Rubicon, was of such flight that neither tongue nor pen could follow it. Toward Spain it wheeled its troop; then toward Dyrrachium, and smote Pharsalia so that to the warm Nile the pain was felt. It saw again Antandros and Simois, whence it set forth, and there where Hector lies; and ill for Ptolemy then it shook itself. Thence it swooped flashing down on Juba; then wheeled again unto your west, where it heard the Pompeian trumpet. Of what it did with the next standard-bearer,[7] Bruttis and Cassius are barking in Hell; and it made Modena and Perugia woful. Still does the sad Cleopatra weep therefor, who, fleeing before it, took from the asp sudden and black death. With him it ran far as the Red Sea shore; with him it set the world in peace so great that on Janus his temple was locked up. But what the ensign which makes me speak had done before, and after was to do, through the mortal realm that is subject to it, becomes in appearance little and obscure, if in the hand of the third Caesar[8] it be looked at with clear eye, and with pure affection. For the living Justice which inspires me granted to it, in the hand of him of whom I speak, the glory of doing vengeance for Its own ire[9] — now marvel here at that which I unfold to thee, — then with Titus it ran to do vengeance for the avenging of the ancient sin.[2] And when the Lombard tooth bit the Holy Church, under its wings Charlemagne, conquering, succored her.

[1] Ironical. The meaning is, “how wrongly.”

[2] The Ghibelline.

[3] The Guelph.

[4] Son of Evander, King of Latium, sent by his father to aid Aeneas. His death in battle against Turnus led to that of Turnus himself, and to the possession of the Latian kingdom by Aeneas.

[5] The Horatii and Curiatii.

[6] According to popular tradition Fiesole was destroyed by the Romans after the defeat of Catiline.

[7] Augustus.

[8] Tiberius.

[9] It was under the authority of Rome that Christ was crucified, whereby the sin of Adam. was avenged.

[10] Vengeance was taken on the Jews, because although the death of Christ was divinely ordained, their crime in it was none the less.

"Now canst thou judge of such as those whom I accused above, and of their crimes, which are the cause of all your ills. To the public ensign one opposes the yellow lilies,[1] and the other appropriates it to a party, so that it is hard to see which is most at fault. Let the Ghibellines practice, let them practice their art under another ensign, for he ever follows it ill who parts justice and it. And let not this new Charles[2] strike it down with his Guelphs, but let him fear its talons, which from a loftier lion have stripped the fell. Often ere now the sons have wept for the sin of the father; and let him not believe that for his lilies Goa win change His arms.

[1] The fleur-de-lys of France.

[2] Charles II., King of Apulia, son of Charles of Anjou.

"This little star is furnished with good spirits who have been active in order that honor and fame may follow them. And when the desires thus straying mount here, it must needs be that the rays of the true love mount upward less living.[1] But in the commeasuring of our wages with our desert is part of our joy, because we see them neither less nor greater. Hereby the living Justice so sweetens the affection in us, that it can never be bent aside to any wrong. Diverse voices make sweet notes; thus in our life diverse benches[2] render sweet harmony among these wheels.

[1] The desire for fame interferes with, though it may not wholly prevent, the true love of God.

[2] The different grades of the blessed.

"And within the present pearl shines the light of Romeo, whose great and beautiful work was ill rewarded. But the Provencals who wrought against him are not smiling; and forsooth he goes an ill road who makes harm for himself of another's good deed.[1] Four daughters, and each a queen, had Raymond Berenger, and Romeo, a humble person and a pilgrim, did this[2] for him. And then crooked words moved him to demand a reckoning of this just man, who rendered to him seven and five for ten. Then he departed, poor and old, and if the world but knew the heart he had, while begging his livelihood bit by bit, much as it lauds him it would laud him more."

[1] According to Giovanni Villani (vi. 90), one Romeo, a pilgrim, came to the court of Raymond Berenger IV., Count of Provence (who died, in 1245), and winning the count's favor, served him with such wisdom and fidelity that by his means his master's revenues were greatly increased, and his four daughters married to four kings, — Margaret, to Louis IX. of France, St. Louis; Eleanor, to Henry III. of England; Sanzia, to Richard, Earl of Cornwall (brother of Henry III.), elected King of the Romans; and Beatrice, to Charles of Anjou

(brother of Louis IX.), King of Apulia and Sicily. The Provencal nobles, jealous of Romeo, procured his dismissal, and he departed, with his mule and his pilgrim's staff and scrip, and was never seen more.

[2] The making each a queen.

CANTO VII.

Discourse of Beatrice. — The Fall of Man. — The scheme of his Redemption.

"Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaoth, superillustrans claritate tua felices ignes horum malacoth!"[1] — thus, turning to its own melody, this substance,[2] upon which a double light is twinned,[3] was seen by me to sing. And it and the others moved with their dance, and like swiftest sparks veiled themselves to me with sudden distance. I was in doubt, and was saying to myself, "Tell her, tell her," I was saying, "tell her, my Lady, who slakes my thirst with her sweet distillings;" but that reverence which lords it altogether over me, only by BE and by ICE,[4] bowed me again like one who drowses. Little did Beatrice endure me thus, and she began, irradiating me with a smile such as would make a man in the fire happy, "According to my infallible advisement, how a just vengeance could be justly avenged has set thee thinking. But I will quickly loose thy mind: and do thou listen, for my words will make thee a present of a great doctrine.

[1] "Hosanna! Holy God of Sabaoth, beaming with thy brightness upon the blessed fires of these realms."

[2] Substance, as a scholastic term, signifies a being subsisting by itself with a quality of its own. "Substantiae nomen significat essentiam cui competit sic esse, id est per se esse; quod tamen esse non est ipsa ejus essentia." — Summa Theol. I. iii. 5.

[3] The double light of Emperor and compiler of the Laws.

[4] Only by the sound of her name.

"By not enduring for his own good a curb upon the power which wills, that man who was not born, — damning himself, damned all his offspring; wherefore the human race lay sick below for many centuries, in great error, till it pleased the Word of God to descend where He, by the sole act of His eternal love, united with Himself in person the nature which had. removed itself from its Maker.

"Now direct thy sight to the discourse which follows. This nature, united with its Maker, became sincere and good, as it had been created; but by itself it had been banished from Paradise, because it turned aside from the way of truth and from its own life. The punishment therefore which the cross afforded, if it be measured by the nature assumed, none ever so justly stung; and, likewise, none was ever of such great wrong, regarding the Person who suffered, with whom this nature was united. Therefore from one act issued things diverse; for unto God and unto the Jews one death was pleasing: by it earth trembled and the heavens were opened. No more henceforth ought it to seem perplexing to thee, when it is said that a just vengeance was afterward avenged by a just court,

"But I see now thy mind tied up, from thought to thought, within a knot the loosing of which is awaited with great desire, Thou sayest, 'I discern clearly that which I bear; but it is occult to we why God should will only this mode for our redemption.' This decree, brother, stands buried to the eyes of every one whose wit is not full grown in the flame of love. Truly, inasmuch as on this mark there is much gazing, and little is discerned, I will tell why such mode was most worthy. The Divine Goodness, which from Itself spurns all rancor, burning in Itself so sparkles that It displays the eternal beauties. That which distils immediately[1] from It, thereafter has no end, for when It seals, Its imprint is not removed. That which from It immediately rains down is wholly free, because it is not subject unto the power of the new things.[2] It is the most conformed to It, and therefore pleases It the most; for the Holy Ardor which irradiates every thing is most living in what is most resemblance to Itself. With all these things[3] the human creature is advantaged, and if one fail, he needs must fall from his nobility. Sin alone is that which disfranchises him, and makes him unlike the Supreme Good, so that by Its light he is little illumined. And to his dignity he never returns, unless, where sin makes void, he fill up for evil pleasures with just penalties. Your nature, when it sinned totally in its seed,[4] was removed from these dignities, even as from Paradise; nor could they be recovered, if thou considerest full subtly, by any way, without passing by one of these fords: — either that God alone by His courtesy should forgive, or that man by himself should make satisfaction for his folly. Fix now thine eye within the abyss of the eternal counsel, fixed as closely on my speech as thou art able. Man within his own limits could never make satisfaction, through not being able to descend so far with humility in subsequent obedience, as disobeying he intended to ascend; and this is the reason why man was excluded from power to make satisfaction by himself. Therefore it behoved God by His own paths[5] to restore man to his entire life, I mean by one, or else by both. But because the work of the workman is so much the more pleasing, the more it represents of the goodness of the heart whence it issues, the Divine Goodness which imprints the world was content to proceed by all Its paths to lift you up again; nor between the last night and the first day has there been or will there be so lofty and so magnificent a procedure either by one or by the other; for God was more liberal in giving Himself to make man sufficient to lift himself up again, than if only of Himself He had pardoned him. And all the other modes were scanty in respect to justice, if the Son of God had not humbled himself to become incarnate.

[1] Without the intervention of a second cause.

[2] That is, of the heavens, new as compared with the First Cause.

[3] That is, with immediate creation, with immortality, with free will, with likeness to God, and the love of God for it.

[4] Adam.

[5] "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." — Psalm xxv. 10. Truth may be here interpreted, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, as justice.

"Now to fill completely every desire of thine, I return to a certain place to clear it up, in order that thou mayest see there even, as I do. Thou sayest, 'I see the water, I see the fire, the air; and the earth, and all their mixtures come to corruption, and endure short while, and yet these things were created;' so that, if what I have said has been true, they ought to be secure against corruption. The Angels, brother, and the sincere[1] country in which thou art, may be called created, even as they are, in their entire being; but the elements which thou hast named, and those things which are made of them, are informed by a created power.[2] The matter of which they consist was created; the informing power in these stars which go round about them was created. The ray and the motion of the holy lights draw out from its potential elements[3] the soul of every brute and of the plants; but the Supreme Benignity inspires your life without intermediary, and enamors it of Itself so that ever after it desires It. And hence[4] thou canst argue further your resurrection, if thou refleetest bow the human flesh was made when the first parents were both made."

[1] Sincere is here used in the sense of incorruptible, or perhaps unspoiled, — the quality of the Heavens as contrasted with the Earth.

[2] The elements axe informed, that is, receive their specific being not immediately from Goa, but mediately through the informing Intelligences.

[3] Literally, "from the potentiate mingling," that is, from the matter endowed with the potentiality of becoming informed by the vegetative and the sensitive soul.

[4] From the principle that what proceeds immediately from Goa is immortal.

CANTO VIII.

Ascent to the Heaven of Venus. — Spirits of Lovers, Source of the order and the varieties in mortal things.

The world in its peril[1] was wont to believe that the beautiful Cypriote[2] revolving in the third epicycle rayed out mad love; wherefore the ancient people in their ancient error not only unto her did honor with sacrifice and with votive cry, but they honored Dione[3] also and Cupid, the one as her mother, the other as her son, and they said that he had sat in Dido's lap[4] And from her, from whom I take my beginning, they took the name of the star which the sun wooes, now at her back now at her front.[5] I was not aware of the ascent to it; but of being in it, my Lady, whom I saw become more beautiful, gave me full assurance.

[1] In heathen times.

[2] Venus, so called from her birth in Cyprus.

[3] Dione, daughter of Oceanus and Thetis, mother of Venus.

[4] Under the form of Ascanius, as Virgil tells in the first book of the Aeneid.

[5] According as it is morning or evening star.

And even as in a flame a spark is seen, and as voice from voice is distinguished when one is steady and the other goes and returns, I saw in that light other lamps moving in a circle more and less rapidly, in the measure, I believe, of their inward vision. From a cold cloud winds never descended, or visible or not, go swift, that they would not seem impeded and slow to him who had seen these divine lights coming to us, leaving the circling begun first among the high Seraphim. And within those who appeared most in front was sounding HOSANNA, so that never since have I been without desire of hearing it again. Then one came nearer to us, and alone began, "We all are ready to thy pleasure, that thou mayest joy in us. With one circle, with one circling, and with one thirst,[1] we revolve with the celestial Princes,[2] to whom thou in the world once said: 'Ye who intelligent move the third heaven;' and we are so full of love that, to please thee, a little quiet will not be less sweet to us."

[1] One circle in space, one circling in eternity, one thirst for the vision of God.

[2] The third in ascending order of the hierarchy of the Angels, corresponding with the heaven of Venus.

After my eyes had offered themselves reverently to my Lady, and she had of herself made them contented and assured, they turned again to the light which had promised so much; and, "Tell who ye are," was my utterance, stamped with great affection. And how much greater alike in quantity and quality did I see it

become, through the new gladness which was added to its gladnesses when I spoke! Become thus, it said to me,[1] "The world had me below short while; and had it been longer much evil had not been which will be. My joy which rays around me, and hides me like a creature swathed in its own silk, holds me concealed from thee. Much didst thou love me, and thou hadst good reason; for had I stayed below I had showed thee of my love far more than the leaves. That left bank which is bathed by the Rhone, after it has mingled with the Sorgue, awaited me in due time for its lord;[2] and that born of Ansonia[3] which is towned with Bari, with Gaeta, and with Catona,[4] whence the Tronto and the Verde disgorge into the sea. Already was shining on my brow the crown of that land which the Danube waters after it abandons its German banks;[5] and the fair Trinacria[6] (which is darkened, not by Typhoeus but by nascent sulphur, on the gulf between Pachynus and Pelorus which receives greatest annoy from Eurus[7]) would be still awaiting its kings descended through me from Charles and Rudolph,[8] if evil rule, which always embitters the subject people, had not moved Palermo to shout, 'Die! Die!'[9] And if my brother had taken note of this,[10] he would already put to flight the greedy poverty of Catalonia, in order that it might not do him harm: for truly there is need for him or for some other to look to it, so that on his laden bark more load be not put. His own nature, which descended niggardly from a liberal one, would have need of such a soldiery as should not care to put into a chest."[11]

[1] It is Charles Martel, son of Charles II. of Naples, who speaks. He was born about 1270, and in 1294 he was at Florence for more than twenty days, and at this time may have become acquainted with Dante. Great honor was done him by the Florentines, and he showed great love to them, so that he won favor from everybody, says Villani. He died in 1295.

[2] Charles of Anjou, grandfather of Charles Martel, had received this part of Provence as dowry of his wife Beatrice, the youngest daughter of Raymond Berenger.

[3] A name for Italy, used only by the poets.

[4] Bari on the Adriatic, Gaeta on the Mediterranean, and Catons at the too of Italy, together with the two rivers named, give roughly the boundaries of the Kingdom of Naples.

[5] The mother of Charles Martel was sister of Ladislaus IV., King of Hungary. He died without offspring, and Charles II. claimed the kingdom by right of his wife.

[6] Sicily; the gulf darkened by sulphurous fumes is the Bay of Calabria, which lies exposed to Eurus, that is, to winds from the southeast.

[7] The sea between Cape Pachynus, the extreme southeastern point of the island, and Cape Pelorus, the extreme northeastern, lies exposed to the violence of Eurus or the East wind. Clouds of smoke from Etna sometimes darken it. The eruptions of Etna were ascribed by Ovid (Metam. v., 346-353) to the struggles of Typhoeus, one of the rebellious Giants. Ovid's verses suggested this description.

[8] From his father, Charles H., or his grandfather, Charles of Anjou, and from the Emperor Rudolph of Hapsburg, who was the father of Clemence, Charles Martel's wife.

[9] By the insurrection which began at Palermo in 1282, — the famous Sicilian Vespers, — the French were driven from the island.

[10] This brother was Robert, the third son of Charles II. He had been kept as a hostage in Catalonia from 1288 to 1295, and when he became King of Naples in 1309 he introduced into his service many Catalonian officials. The words of Charles Martel are prophetic of the evils wrought by their greed.

[11] Officials who would not, by oppression of the subjects, seek their private gain.

"Because I believe that the deep joy which thy speech, my lord, infuses in me is seen by thee there where every good ends and begins[1] even as I see it in myself, it is the more grateful to me; and this also I hold dear, that thou discernest it, gazing upon God.[2] Thou hast made me glad; and in like wise do thou make clear to me (since in speaking thou bast moved me to doubt) how bitter can issue from sweet seed." This I to him; and he to me, "If I am able to show to thee a truth, thou wilt hold thy face to that which thou askest, as thou dost hold thy back. The Good which turns and contents all the realm which thou ascendest, makes its providence to be a power in these great bodies.[3] And not the natures only are foreseen in the Mind which by itself is perfect, but they together with their salvation.[4] For whatsoever this bow shoots falls disposed to its foreseen end, even as a thing directed to its aim. Were this not so, the heavens through which thou journeyest would produce their effects in such wise that they would not be works of art but ruins; and that cannot be, if the Intelligences which move these stars are not defective, and defective also the prime Intelligence which has not made them perfect.[5] Dost thou wish that this truth be made still clearer to thee?" And I, "No, truly; because I see it to be impossible that Nature should weary in that which is needful."[6] Whereupon he again, "Now say, would it be worse for man on earth if he were not a citizen?"[7] "Yes," answered I, "and here I ask not the reason."[8] "And can he be so, unless he live there below in divers manner through divers offices?[9] No; if your master[10] writes well of this." So he went on deducing far as here; then he concluded, "Hence it behoves that the roots of your works must be diverse.[11] Wherefore one is born Solon, and another Xerxes, another Melchisedech, and another he who, flying through the air, lost his son. The revolving nature, which is the seal of the mortal wax, performs its art well, but does not distinguish one inn from another.[12] Hence it happens that Esau differs in seed from Jacob, and Quirinus comes from so mean a father that he is ascribed to Mars. The generated nature would always make its path like its progenitors, if the divine foresight did not conquer. Now that which was behind thee is before thee, but that thou mayest know that I have joy in thee, I wish that thou cloak thee with a corollary.[13] Nature, if she find fortune discordant with herself, like every other seed out of its region, always makes bad result. And if the world down there would fix attention on the foundation which nature lays, following that, it would have its people good. But

ye wrest to religion one who shall be born to gird on the sword, and ye make a king of one who is for preaching; wherefore your track is out of the road."

[1] Is seen in the mind of God.

[2] My own joy is the dearer in that thou seest that it is more grateful to me because known by thee.

[3] The providence of God is fulfilled through the influences of the Heavens acting upon the natures subject to them.

[4] That is, together with the good ends for which they are created and ordained.

[5] Defect in the subordinate Intelligences would imply defect in God, which is impossible.

[6] It is impossible that the order of nature should fail, that order being the design of God in creation.

[7] That is, united with other men in society.

[8] Because man is by nature a social animal, and cannot attain his true end except as a member of a community.

[9] Society cannot exist without diversity in the functions of its members.

[10] Aristotle, "the master of human reason, who treats of this in many places, for instance in his Ethics, i. 7, where he speaks of man as "by nature social," so that his end is accomplished only in society.

[11] Human dispositions, the roots of human works, must be diverse in order to produce diverse effects.

[12] The spheres pour down their various influences without discrimination in the choice of the individual upon whom they fall. Hence sons may differ in their dispositions from their fathers.

[13] This additional statement completes the instruction, as a cloak completes the clothing of a body.

CANTO IX.

The Heaven of Venus. — Conversation of Dante with Cunizza da Romano, — With Folco of Marseilles. — Rahab. — Avarice of the Papal Court.

After thy Charles, O beautiful Clemence,[1] had enlightened me, he told to me of the treasons which his seed must suffer. But he said, “Be silent, and let the years revolve:” so that I can tell nothing, save that just lament shall follow on your wrongs.[2]

[1] The widow of Charles Martel.

[2] Those who have done the wrong shall justly lament therefor.

And now the life of that holy light had turned again unto the Sun which fills it, as that Good which suffices for every thing. Ah, souls deceived, and creatures impious, who from such Good turn away your hearts, directing your foreheads unto vanity!

And lo! another of those splendors made towards me, and in brightening outwardly was signifying its will to please me. The eyes of Beatrice, which were fixed upon me, as before, made me assured of dear assent to my desire. “I pray thee give swift quittance to my wish, blessed spirit,” I said, “and afford me proof that what think I can reflect on thee.”[1] Whereon the light which was still new[2] to me, from out its depth, wherein erst it was singing, proceeded, as one whom doing good delights, “In that part[3] of the wicked Italian land, which lies between Rialto and the founts of the Brenta and the Piave, rises a hill,[4] and mounts not very high, whence a torch descended which made a great assault upon that district. From one root both I and it were born; Cunizza was I called; and I am refulgent here because the light of this star overcame me. But gladly do I pardon to myself the cause of my lot, and it gives me no annoy;[5] which perhaps would seem difficult to your vulgar. Of this resplendent and dear jewel of our kingdom,[6] who is nearest to me, great fame has remained, and ere it die away this hundredth year shall yet come round five times. See if man ought to make himself excellent, so that the first may leave another life! And this the present crowd, which the Tagliameuto and the Adige shut in,[7] considers not; nor yet by being scourged doth it repent. But it will soon come to pass that at the marsh Padua will discolor the water which bathes Vicenza, because her people are stubborn against duty.[8] And where the Sile and the Cagnano unite, one lords it, and goes with his head high, for catching whom the web is already spun.[9] Feltro will yet weep the crime of its impious shepherd, which will be so shameful, that,

for a like, none ever entered Malta.[10] Too large would be the vat which would hold the Ferrarese blood, and weary he who should weigh it, ounce by ounce, which this courteous priest will give to show himself a partisan;[11] and such gifts will be conformed to the living of the country. Above are mirrors, ye call them Thrones,[12] wherefrom God shines on us in his judgments, so that these words seem good to us."[13] Here she was silent, and had to me the semblance of being turned elsewhither by the wheel in which she set herself as she was before.[14]

[1] That thou, gazing on the mind of God, seest therein my thoughts.

[2] Still unknown by name.

[3] The March of Treviso, lying between Venice (Rialto) and the Alps.

[4] The hill on which stood the little stronghold of Romano, the birthplace of the tyrant Azzolino, or Ezzolino, whom Dante had seen in Hell (Canto XII.) punished for his cruel misdeeds, in the river of boiling blood. Cunizza was his sister.

[5] The sin which has limited the capacity of bliss, the sin which has determined the low grade in Paradise of Cunizza, is forgiven and forgotten, and she, like Piccarda, wishes only for that blessedness which she has.

[6] Folco, or Foulquet, of Marseilles, once a famous singer of songs of love, then a bishop. He died in 1213.

[7] The people of the region where Cunizza lived.

[8] The Paduan Guelphs, resisting the Emperor, to whom they owed duty, were defeated more than once, near Vicenza, by Can Grande, during the years in which Dante was writing his poem.

[9] The Sile and the Cagnano unite at Treviso, whose lord, Ricciardo da Camino, was assassinated in 1312.

[10] An act of treachery on the part of the Bishop and Lord of Feltro, Alessandro Novello, in delivering up Ghibelline exiles from Ferrara, of whom thirty were beheaded; a treason so vile that in the tower called Malta, where ecclesiastics who committed capital crimes were imprisoned, no such crime as his was ever punished.

[11] That is, of the Guelphs, by whom the designation of The Party was appropriated.

[12] The Thrones were, according to St. Gregory, that order of Angels through whom God executes his judgments.

[13] Because we see reflected from the Thrones the judgment of God above to fall on the guilty.

[14] See Canto VIII., near the beginning.

The next joy, which was already known to me as an illustrious thing,[1] became to my sight like a fine ruby whereon the sun should strike. Through joy effulgence is gained there on high, even as a smile here; but below[2] the shade darkens outwardly, as the mind is sad.

[1] By the words of Cunizza.

[2] In Hell.

"God sees everything, and thy vision, blessed spirit, is in Him," said I, "so that no wish can steal itself away from thee. Thy voice, then, that ever charms the heavens, with the song of those pious fires which make a cowl for themselves with their six wings,[1] why does it not satisfy my desires? Surely I

should not wait for thy request if I in-theed myself, as thou thyself in-meest."[2] "The greatest deep in which the water spreads,"[3] began then his words, "except of that sea which garlands the earth, between its discordant shores stretches so far counter to the sun, that it makes a meridian where first it was wont to make the horizon.[4] I was a dweller on the shore of that deep, between the Ebro and the Magra,[5] which, for a short way, divides the Genoese from the Tuscan. With almost the same sunset and the same sunrise sit Buggea and the city whence I was, which once made its harbor warm with its own blood.[6] That people to whom my name was known called me Folco, and this heaven is imprinted by me, as I was by it. For the daughter of Belus,[7] harmful alike to Sichaeus and Creusa, burned not more than I, so long as it befitted my hair;[8] nor she of Rhodopea who was deluded by Demophoon;[9] nor Alcides when he had enclosed Iole in his heart.[10] Yet one repents not here, but smiles, not for the fault which returns not to the memory, but for the power which ordained and foresaw. Here one gazes upon the art which adorns so great a work, and the good is discerned whereby the world above turns that below.

[1] The Seraphim, who with their wings cover their faces. See Isaiah, vi. 2.

[2] If I saw thee inwardly as thou seest me. Dante invents the words he uses here, and they are no less unfamiliar in Italian than in English.

[3] The Mediterranean.

[4] According to the geography of the time the Mediterranean stretched from east to west ninety degrees of longitude.

[5] Between the Ebro in Spain and the Magra in Italy lies Marseilles, under almost the same meridian as Buggea (now Bougie) on the African coast.

[6] When the fleet of Caesar defeated that of Pompey with its contingent of vessels and soldiers of Marseilles, B. C. 49.

[7] Dido.

[8] Till my hair grew thin and gray.

[9] Phyllis, daughter of the king of Thrace, who hung herself when deserted by Demophoon, the son of Theseus.

[10] The excess of the love of Hercules for Iole led to his death.

"But in order that thou mayst bear away satisfied all thy wishes which have been born in this sphere, it behoves me to proceed still further. Thou wouldst know who is in this light, which beside me here so sparkles, as a sunbeam on clear water. Now know that therewithin Rahab[1] is at rest, and being joined with our order it is sealed by her in the supreme degree. By this heaven in which the shadow that your world makes comes to a point[2] she was taken up before any other soul at the triumph of Christ. It was well befitting to leave her in some heaven, as a palm of the high victory which was won with the two hands,[3]

because she aided the first glory of Joshua within the Holy Land, which little touches the memory of the Pope.

[1] "By faith the harlot Rabab perished not with them that believed not." — Hebrews, xi. 31. See Joshua, ii. 1-21; vi. 17; James, ii. 25.

[2] The conical shadow of the earth ended, according to Ptolemy, at the heaven of Venus. Philalethes suggests that there may be here an allegorical meaning, the shadow of the earth being shown in feebleness of will, worldly ambition, and inordinate love, which have allotted the souls who appear in these first heavens to the lowest grades in Paradise.

[3] Nailed to the cross. The glory of Joshua was the winning of the Holy Land for the inheritance of the children of Israel.

"Thy city, which is plant of him who first turned his back on his Maker, and whose envy[1] has been so bewept, produces and scatters the accursed flower[2] which has led astray the sheep and the lambs, because it has made a wolf of the shepherd. For this the Gospel and the great Doctors are deserted, and there is study only of the Decretals,[3] as is apparent by their margins. On this the Pope and the Cardinals are intent; their thoughts go not to Nazareth, there where Gabriel spread his wings. But the Vatican, and the other elect parts of Rome, which have been the burial place for the soldiery that followed Peter, shall soon be free from this adultery."[4]

[1] "Through envy of the devil came death into the world." — Wisdom of Solomon, ii. 24.

[2] The lily on its florin.

[3] The books of the Ecclesiastical Law.

[4] By the removal in 1305 of the Papal Court to Avignon.

CANTO X.

Ascent to the Sun. — Spirits of the wise, and the learned in theology. — St. Thomas Aquinas. — He names to Dante those who surround him.

Looking upon His Son with the Love which the one and the other eternally breathe forth, the Primal and Ineffable Power made everything which revolves through the mind or through space with such order that he who contemplates it cannot be without taste of Him.[1] Lift then thy sight, Reader, with me to the lofty wheels, straight to that region where the one motion strikes on the other;[2] and there begin to gaze with delight on the art of that Master who within Himself so loves it that His eye never departs from it. See how from that point the oblique circle which bears the planets[3] branches off, to satisfy the world which calls on them;[4] and if their road had not been bent, much virtue in the heavens would be in vain, and well-nigh every potency dead here below.[5] And if from the straight line its departure had been more or less distant, much of the order of the world, both below and above, would be defective. Now do thou remain, Reader, upon thy bench,[6] following in thought that which is fore. tasted, if thou wouldst be glad far sooner than weary. I have set before thee; henceforth feed thee by thyself, for that theme whereof I have been made scribe wrests all my care unto itself.

[1] All things, as well the spiritual and invisible objects of the intelligence as the corporal and visible objects of sense, were made by God the Father, operating through the Son, with the love of the Holy Spirit, and made in such order that he who contemplates the creation beholds the partial image of the Creator.

[2] At the equinox, the season of Dante's journey, the sun in Aries is at the intersection of the ecliptic and the equator of the celestial sphere, and his apparent motion in his annual revolution cuts the apparent diurnal motion of the fixed stars, which is performed in circles parallel to the equator.

[3] The ecliptic.

[4] Which invokes their influence.

[5] Because on the obliquity of their path depends the variety of their influence.

[6] As a scholar.

The greatest minister of nature, which imprints the world with the power of the heavens, and with its light measures the time for us, in conjunction with that region called to mind above, was circling through the spirals in which from day to day he earlier presents himself.[1] And I was with him; but of the ascent I was not aware, otherwise than as a man is aware, before his first thought, of its coming. Beatrice is she who thus conducts from good to better so swiftly that her act extends not through time.

[1] In that spiral course in which, according to the Ptolemaic system, the sun passes from the equator to the tropic of Cancer, rising earlier every day.

How lucent of itself must that have been which, within the sun where I entered, was appareiit not by color but by light! Though I should call on genius, art, and use, I could not tell it so that it could ever be imagined; but it may be believed, and sight of it longed for. And if our fancies are low for such loftiness, it is no marvel, for beyond the sun was never eye could go. Such[1] was here the fourth family of the High Father, who always satisfies it, showing how He breathes forth, and how He begets.[2] And Beatrice began, “Thank, thank thou the Sun of the Angels, who to this visible one has raised thee by His grace.” Heart of mortal was never so disposed to devotion, and so ready, with its own entire pleasure, to give itself to God, as I became at those words; and all my love was so set on Him that Beatrice was eclipsed in oblivion. It displeased her not; but she so smiled thereat that the splendor of her smiling eyes divided upon many things my singly intent mind.

[1] So lucent, brighter than the sun.

[2] Showing himself in the Holy Spirit and in the Son.

I saw many living and surpassing effulgences make a centre of us, and make a crown of themselves, more sweet in voice than shining in aspect. Thus girt we sometimes see the daughter of Latona, when the air is pregnant so that it holds the thread which makes the girdle.[1] In the court of Heaven, wherefrom I return, are found many jewels so precious and beautiful that they cannot be brought from the kingdom, and of these was the song of those lights. Who wings not himself so that he may fly up thither, let him await the tidings thence from the dumb.

[1] When the air is so full of vapor that it forms a halo.

After those burning suns, thus singing, had circled three times round about us, like stars near fixed poles, they seemed to me as ladies not loosed from a dance, but who stop silent, listening till they have caught the new notes. And within one I heard begin, “Since the ray of grace, whereby true love is kindled, and which thereafter grows multiplied in loving, so shines on thee that it conducts thee upward by that stair upon which, without reascending, no one descends, he who should deny to thee the wine of his flask for thy thirst, would not be more at liberty than water which descends not to the sea.[1] Thou wishest to know with what plants this garland is enflowered, which, round about her, gazes with delight upon the, beautiful Lady who strengthens thee for heaven. I was of the lambs of the holy flock[2] which Dominic leads along the way where one fattens

well if he stray not.[3] This one who is nearest to me on the right was my brother and master; and he was Albert of Cologne,[4] and I Thomas of Aquino. If thus of all the rest thou wishest to be informed, come, following my speech, with thy sight circling around upon the blessed chaplet. That next flaming issues from the smile of Gratian, who so assisted one court and the other that it pleases in Paradise.[5] The next, who at his side adorns our choir, was that Peter who, like the poor woman, offered his treasure to Holy Church.[6] The fifth light, which is most beautiful among us,[7] breathes from such love, that all the world there below is greedy to know tidings of it.[8] Within it is the lofty mind, wherein wisdom so profound was put, that, if the truth is true, to see so much no second has arisen.[9] At his side thou seest the light of that candle, which, below in the flesh, saw most inwardly the angelic nature, and its ministry.[10] In the next little light smiles that advocate of the Christian times, with whose discourse Augustine provided himself.[11] Now if thou leadest the eye of the mind, following my praises, from light to light, thou remainest already thirsting for the eighth. Therewithin, through seeing every good, the holy soul rejoices which makes the deceit of the world manifest to whoso hears him well.[12] The body whence it was hunted out lies below in Cieldauro,[13] and from martyrdom and from exile it came unto this peace. Beyond thou seest flaming the burning breath of Isidore, of Bede, and of Richard who in contemplation was more than man.[14] The one from whom thy look returns to me is the light of a spirit to whom in grave thoughts death seemed to come slow. It is the eternal light of Sigier,[15] who reading in the Street of Straw syllogized truths which were hated."

[1] He would be restrained against his nature, as water prevented from flowing down to the sea.

[2] Of the Order of St. Dominic.

[3] Where one acquires spiritual good, if he be not distracted by the allurement of worldly things.

[4] The learned Doctor, Albertus Magnus.

[5] Gratian was an Italian Benedictine monk, who lived in the 12th century, and compiled the famous work known as the Decretum Gratiani, composed of texts of Scripture, of the Canons of the Church, of Decretals of the Popes, and of extracts from the Fathers, designed to show the agreement of the civil and ecclesiastical law, — a work pleasing in Paradise because promoting concord between the two authorities.

[6] Peter Lombard, a theologian of the 12th century, known as Magister Sententiarum, from his compilation of extracts relating to the doctrines of the Church, under the title of Sententiarum Libri IV. In the proem to his work he says that he desired, "like the poor widow, to cast something from his penury into the treasury of the Lord."

[7] Solomon.

[8] It was matter of debate whether Solomon was among the blessed or the damned.

[9] "Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." — 1 Kings, iii. 12.

[10] Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul (Acts, xvii. 34), to whom was falsely ascribed a book of great repute, written in the fourth century, " On the Celestial Hierarchy."

[11] Paulus Orosius, who wrote his History against the Pagans, at the request of St. Augustine, to defend Christianity from the charge brought against it by the Gentiles of being the source of the calamities which had befallen the Roman world. His work might be regarded as a supplement to St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei.

[12] Boethins, statesman and philosopher. whose work, De Consolatione Philosophiae, was one of the books held in highest esteem by Dante.

[13] Boethius, who was put to death in Pavia, in 524, was buried in the church of S. Pietro in Ciel d' Oro — St. Peter's of the Golden Ceiling.

[14] Isidore, bishop of Seville, died 636; the Venerable Bede, died 735; Richard, prior of the Monastery of St. Victor, at Paris, a mystic of the 12th century; all eminent theologians.

[15] Sigier of Brabant, who lectured, applying logic to questions in theology, at Paris, in the 13th century, in the Rue du Fouarre.

Then, as a horologe which calls us at the hour when the Bride of God[1] rises to sing matins to her Bridegroom that he may love her, in which the one part draws and urges the other, sounding ting! ting! with such sweet note that the well-disposed spirit swells with love, so saw I the glorious wheel move, and render voice to voice in concord and in sweetness which cannot be known save there where joy becomes eternal.

[1] The Church.

CANTO XI.

The Vanity of worldly desires, — St. Thomas Aquinas undertakes to solve two doubts perplexing Dante. — He narrates the life of St. Francis of Assisi.

O insensate care of mortals, how defective are those syllogisms which make thee downward beat thy wings! One was going after the Laws, and one after the Aphorisms,[1] and one following the priesthood, and one to reign by force or by sophisms, and one to rob, and one to civic business; one, involved in pleasure of the flesh, was wearying himself, and one was giving himself to idleness, when I, loosed from all these things, with Beatrice, was thus gloriously received on high in Heaven.

[1] The Aphorisms of Hippocrates, meaning here, the study of medicine.

When each[1] had returned unto that point of the circle at which it was at first, it stayed, as a candle in a candlestick. And within that light which first had spoken to me I heard, as smiling it began, making itself more clear, "Even as I am resplendent with its radiance, so, looking into the Eternal Light, I apprehend whence thou drawest the occasion of thy thoughts. Thou art perplexed, and hast the wish that my speech be bolted again in language so open and so plain that it may be level to thy sense, where just now I said, 'where well one fattens,' and there where I said, 'the second has not been born;' and here is need that one distinguish well.

[1] Each of the lights which had encircled. Beatrice and Dante.

"The Providence which governs the world with that counsel, in which every created vision is vanquished ere it reach the depth, in order that the bride[1] of Him, who with loud cries espoused her with His blessed blood, might go toward her beloved, secure in herself and also more faithful to Him, ordained two princes in her favor, who on this side and that should be to her for guides. The one was all seraphic in ardor,[2] the other, through wisdom, was a splendor of cherubic light[3] on earth. Of the one I will speak, because both are spoken of in praising one, whichever be taken, for unto one end were their works.

[1] The Church.

[2] St. Francis of Assisi

[3] St. Dominic.

"Between the Tupino and the water[1] which descends from the hill chosen by the blessed Ubaldo, hangs the fertile slope of a high mountain, wherefrom

Perugia at Porta Sole[2] feeleth cold and heat, while behind it Nocera and Gualdo weep because of their heavy yoke.[3] On that slope, where it most breaks its steepness, rose a Sun upon the world, as this one sometimes does from the Ganges. Therefore let him who talks of that place not say Ascesi,[4] for he would speak short, but Orient,[5] if be would speak properly. He was not yet very far from his rising when he began to make the earth feel some comfort from his great virtue. For, still a youth, he ran to strife[6] with his father for a lady such as unto whom, even as unto death, no one unlocks the gate of pleasure; and before his spiritual court et coram patre[7] to her he had himself united; thereafter from day to day he loved her more ardently. She, deprived of her first husband,[8] for one thousand and one hundred years and more, despised and obscure, had stood without wooing till he came;[9] nor had it availed[10] to hear, that he, who caused fear to all the world, found her at the sound of his voice secure with Amyclas;[11] nor had it availed to have been constant and bold, so that where Mary remained below, she wept with Christ upon the cross. But that I may not proceed too obscurely, take henceforth in my diffuse speech Francis and Poverty for these lovers. Their concord and their glad semblances made love, and wonder, and sweet regard to be the cause of holy thoughts;[12] so that the venerable Bernard first bared his feet,[13] and ran following such great peace, and, running, it seemed to him that he was slow. Oh unknown riches! oh fertile good! Egidius bares his feet and Sylvester bares his feet, following the bridegroom; so pleasing is the bride. Then that father and that master goes on his way with his lady, and with that family which the humble cord was now girding.[14] Nor did baseness of heart weigh down his brow at being son of Pietro Bernardone,[15] nor at appearing marvellously despised; but royally he opened his bard intention to Innocent, and received from bim the first seal for his Order.[16] After the poor people had increased behind him, whose marvellous life would be better sung in glory of the heavens, the holy purpose of this archimandrite[17] was adorned with a second crown by the Eternal Spirit, through Honorius.[18] And when, through thirst for martyrdom, he had preached Christ and the rest who followed him in the proud presence of the Sultan,[19] and because he found the people too unripe for conversion, and in order not to stay in vain, had returned to the fruit of the Italian grass,[20] on the rude rock,[21] between the Tiber and the Arno, he took from Christ the last seal,[22] which his limbs bore for two years. When it pleased Him, who had allotted him to such great good, to draw him up to the reward which he had gained in making himself abject, he commended his most dear lady to his brethren as to rightful heirs, and commanded them to love her faithfully; and from her lap, his illustrious soul willed to depart, returning to its realm, and for his body he willed no other bier.[23]

[1] The Chiassi, which flows from the hill chosen for his hermitage by St. Ubaldo.

[2] The gate of Perugia, which fronts Monte Subasio, on which Assisi lies, some fifteen miles to the south.

[3] Towns, southeast of Assisi, oppressed by their rulers.

[4] So the name Assisi was sometimes spelled, and here with a play on ascesi (I have risen).

[5] As the sun at the vernal equinox, the sacred season of the Creation and the Resurrection, rises in the due east or orient, represented in the geographical system of the time by the Ganges, so the place where this new Sun of righteousness arose should be called Orient.

[6] Devoting himself to poverty against his father's will.

[7] Before the Bishop of Assisi, and "in presence of his father," he renounced his worldly possessions.

[8] Christ.

[9] St. Francis was born in 1182.

[10] To procure suitors for her,

[11] When Caesar knocked at the door of Amyclas his voice caused no alarm, because Poverty made the fisherman secure. — Lucan, Pharsalia, V. 515 ff.

[12] In the hearts of those who behold them.

[13] The followers of Francis imitated him in going barefoot.

[14] The cord for their only girdle.

[15] Perhaps, because his father was neither noble nor famous.

[16] In or about 1210 Pope Innocent III. approved the Rule of St. Francis.

[17] "The head of the fold:" a term of the Greek Church, designating the head of one or more monasteries.

[18] In 1223, Honorius III. confirmed the sanction of the Order.

[19] Probably the Sultan of Egypt, at the time of the Fifth Crusade, in 1219.

[20] To the harvest of good grain in Italy.

[21] Mount Alvernia.

[22] The Stigmata.

[23] St. Francis died in 1226.

"Think now of what sort was he,[1] who was a worthy colleague to keep the bark of Peter on the deep sea to its right aim; and this was our Patriarch:[2] wherefore thou canst see that whoever follows him as he commands loads good merchandise. But his flock has become so greedy of strange food that. it cannot but be scattered over diverse meadows; and as his sheep, remote and vagabond, go farther from him, the emptier of milk they return to the fold. Truly there are some of them who fear the harm, and keep close to the shepherd; but they are so few that little cloth suffices for their cowls. Now if my words are not obscure, if thy hearing has been attentive, if thou recallest to mind that which I have said,

thy wish will be content in part, because thou wilt see the plant wherefrom they are hewn,[3] and thou wilt see how the wearer of the thong reasons— ‘Where well one fattens if one does not stray.’

[1] How holy he must have been.

[2] St. Dominic.

[3] The plant of which the words are splinters or chips; in other terms, “thou wilt understand the whole ground of my assertion, and thou wilt see what a Dominican, wearer of the leather thong of the Order, means, when he says that the flock of Dominic fatten, if they stray not from the road on which he leads them.”

CANTO XII.

Second circle of the spirits of wise religious men, doctors of the Church and teachers. — St. Bonaventura narrates the life of St. Dominic, and tells the names of those who form the circle with him.

Soon as the blessed flame uttered the last word of its speech the holy mill-stone[1] began to rotate, and had not wholly turned in its gyration before another enclosed it with a circle, and matched motion with motion, song with song; song which in those sweet pipes so surpasses our Muses, our Sirens, as a primal splendor that which it reflects.[2] As two bows parallel and of like colors are turned across a thin cloud when Juno gives the order to her handmaid[3] (the outer one born of that within, after the manner of the speech of that wandering one[4] whom love consumed, as the sun does vapors), and make the people here presageful, because of the covenant which God established with Noah concerning the world, that it is nevermore to be flooded; so the two garlands of those sempiternal roses turned around us, and so the outer responded to the inner. After the dance and the other great festivity, alike of the singing and of the flaming, light with light joyous and courteous, had become quiet together at an instant and with one will (just as the eyes which must needs together close and open to the pleasure that moves them), from the heart of one of the new lights a voice proceeded, which made me seem as the needle to the star in turning me to its place and it began,[5] "The love which makes me beautiful draws me to speak of the other leader by whom[6] so well has been spoken here of mine. It is fit that where one is the other be led in, so that as they served in war with one another, together likewise may their glory shine.

[1] The garland of spirits encircling Beatrice and Dante.

[2] As an original ray is brighter than one reflected.

[3] Iris.

[4] Echo.

[5] It is St. Bonaventura, the biographer of St. Francis, who speaks. He became General of the Order in 1256, and died in 1276.

[6] By whom, through one of his brethren.

"The army of Christ, which it had cost so dear to arm afresh,[1] was moving slow, mistrustful, and scattered, behind the standard,[2] when the Emperor who forever reigns provided for the soldiery that was in peril, through grace alone, not because it was worthy, and, as has been said, succored his Bride with two champions, by whose deed, by whose word, the people gone astray were rallied.

[1] The elect, who had lost grace through Adam's sin, were armed afresh by the costly sacirifice of the Son of God.

[2] The Cross.

"In that region where the sweet west wind rises to open the new leaves wherewith Europe is seen to reclothe herself, not very far from the beating of the waves behind which, over their long course, the sun sometimes bides himself to all men, sits the fortunate Callaroga, under the protection of the great shield on which the Lion is subject and subjugates.[1] Therein was born the amorous lover of the Christian faith, the holy athlete, benignant to his own, and to his enemies harsh.[2] And when it was created, his mind was so replete with living virtue, that in his mother it made her a prophetess.[3] After the espousals between him and the faith were completed at the sacred font, where they dowered each other with mutual safety, the lady who gave the assent for him saw in a dream the marvellous fruit which was to proceed from him and from his heirs;[4] and in order that he might be spoken of as he was,[5] a spirit went forth from here[6] to name him with the possessive of Him whose he wholly was. Dominic[7] he was called; and I speak of him as of the husbandman whom Christ elected to his garden to assist him. Truly he seemed the messenger and familiar of Christ; for the first love that was manifest in him was for the first counsel that Christ gave.[8] Oftentimes was he found by his nurse upon the ground silent and awake, as though he said, 'I am come for this.' O father of him truly Felix! Omother of him truly Joan, if this, being interpreted, means as is said![9]

[1] The shield of Castile, on which two lions and two castles are quartered, one lion below and one above.

[2] St. Dominic, born in 1170.

[3] His mother dreamed that she gave birth to a dog, black and white in color, with a lighted torch in its mouth, which set the world on fire; symbols of the black and white robe of the Order, and of the flaming zeal of its brethren. Hence arose a play of words on their name, Domini cani, "the dogs of the Lord."

[4] The godmother of Dominic saw in dream a star on the forehead and another on the back of the head of the child, signifying the light that should stream from him over East and West.

[5] That his name might express his nature.

[6] From heaven.

[7] Dominicus, the possessive of Dominus, "Belonging to the Lord."

[8] "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor." — Matthew, xix. 21.

[9] Felix, signifying "happy," and Joanna, "full of grace."

"Not for the world,[1] for which men now toil, following him of Ostia and Thaddeus,[2] but for the love of the true manna, be became in short time a great teacher, such that he set himself to go about the vineyard, which quickly fades if the vinedresser is bad; and of the Seat[3] which was formerly more benign unto the

righteous poor (not through itself but through him who sits there and degenerates[4]), he asked not to dispense or two or three for six,[5] not the fortune of the first vacancy, non decimas, quae sunt pauperum Dei,[6] but leave to fight against the errant world for that seed[7] of which four and twenty plants are girding thee. Then with doctrine and with will, together with the apostolic office,[8] he went forth like a torrent which a lofty vein pours out, and on the heretical stocks his onset smote with most vigor there where the resistance was the greatest. From him proceeded thereafter divers streams wherewith the catholic garden is watered, so that its bushes stand more living.

[1] The goods of this world.

[2] Henry of Susa, cardinal of Ostia, who wrote a much studied commentary on the Decretals, and Thaddeus of Bologna, who, says Giovanni Villani, "was the greatest physician in Christendom." The thought is the same as that at the beginning of Canto XI, where Dante speaks of "one following the Laws, and one the Aphorisms."

[3] The Papal chair.

[4] The grammatical construction is imperfect; the meaning is that the change in the temper of the see of Rome is due not to the fault of the Church itself, but to that of the Pope.

[5] Not for license to compound for unjust acquisitions by de. voting a part of them to pious uses.

[6] "Not the tithes which belong to God's poor."

[7] The true faith; "the seed is the word of God." — Luke, viii. 11.

[8] The authority conferred on him by Innocent III.

If such was one wheel of the chariot on which the Holy Church defended itself and vanquished in the field its civil strife,[1] surely the excellence of the other should be very plain to thee, concerning which Thomas before my coming was so courteous. But the track which the highest part of its circumference made is derelict;[2] So that the mould is where the crust was.[3] His household, which set forth straight with their feet upon his footprints, are so turned round that they set the forward foot on that behind;[4] and soon the quality of the barvest of this bad culture shall be seen, when the tare will complain that the chest is taken from it.[5] Yet I say, he who should search our volume leaf by leaf might still find a page where he would read, 'I am that which I am wont:' but it will not be from Casale nor from Acquasparta,[6] whence such come unto the Written Rule that one flies from it, and the other contracts it.

[1] The heresies within its own borders.

[2] The track made by St. Francis is deserted.

[3] The change of metaphor is sudden; good wine makes a crust, bad wine mould in the cask.

[4] They go in an opposite direction from that followed by the saint.

[5] That it is taken from the chest in the granary to be burned.

[6] Frate Ubertino of Casale, the leader of a party of zealots among the Franciscans, enforced the Rule of the Order with excessive strictness; Matteo, of Acquasparta, general of the Franciscans in 1257, relaxed it.

"I am the life of Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, who in great offices always set sinister[1] care behind me. Illuminato and Augustin are here, who were among the first barefoot poor that in the cord made themselves friends to God. Hugh of St. Victor[2] is here with them, and Peter Mangiadore, and Peter of Spain,[3] who down below shines in twelve books; Nathan the prophet, and the Metropolitan Chrysostom,[4] and Anselm,[5] and that Donatus[6] who deigned to set his hand to the first art; Raban[7] is here, and at my side shines the Calabrian abbot Joachim,[8] endowed with prophetic spirit.

[1] Sinister, that is, temporal.

[2] Hugh (1097-1141), a noted schoolman, of the famous monastery of St. Victor at Paris.

[3] Peter Mangiador, or Comestor, "the Eater," so called as being a devourer of books. He himself wrote books famous in their time. He was chancellor of the University at Paris, and died in 1198. The Summae logicales of Peter of Spain, in twelve books, was long held in high repute. He was made Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum in 1273, and was elected Pope in 1276, taking the name of John XXI. He was killed in May, 1277, by the fall of the ceiling of the chamber in which he was sleeping in the Papal palace at Viterbo. He is the only Pope of recent times whom Dante meets in Paradise.

[4] The famous doctor of the Church, patriarch of Constantinople.

[5] Born about 1033 at Aosta in Piedmont, consecrated Arch. bishop of Canterbury in 1093, died 1109; magnus et subtilis doctor in theologia."

[6] The compiler of the treatise on grammar (the first of the seven arts of the Trivium. and the Quadrivium), which was in use throughout the Middle Ages.

[7] Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz, in the ninth century; a great scholar and teacher, "cui similem suo tempore non habuit Ecelesia."

[8] Joachim, Abbot of Flora, whose mystic prophecies had great vogue.

"The flaming courtesy of Brother Thomas, and his discreet discourse, moved me to celebrate[1] so great a paladin; and with me moved this company."

[1] Literally, "to envy;" hence, perhaps, "to admire," "to praise," "to celebrate;" but the meaning is doubtful.

CANTO XIII.

St. Thomas Aquinas speaks again, and explains the relation of the wisdom of Solomon to that of Adam and of Christ, and declares the vanity of human judgment.

Let him imagine,[1] who desires to understand well that which I now saw (and let him retain the image like a firm rock, while I am speaking), fifteen stars which in different regions vivify the heaven with brightness so great that it overcomes all thickness of the air; let him imagine that Wain[2] for which the bosom of our heaven suffices both night and day, so that in the turning of its pole it disappears not; let him imagine the mouth of that horn[3] which begins at the point of the axle on which the primal wheel goes round, — to have made of themselves two signs in the heavens, like that which the daughter of Minos made, when she felt the frost of death,[4] and one to have its rays within the other, and both to revolve in such manner that one should go first and the other after; and he will have as it were the shadow of the true constellation, and of the double dance, which was circling the point where I was; because it is as much beyond our wont as the motion of the heaven which outspeeds all the rest is swifter than the movement of the Chiana.[5] There was sung riot Bacchus, not Paean, but three Persons in a divine nature, and it and the human in one Person. The singing and the revolving completed each its measure, and those holy lights gave attention to us, making themselves happy from care to care.[6]

[1] To form an idea of the brightness of the two circles of spirits, let the reader imagine fifteen of the brightest separate stars, joined with the seven stars of the Great Bear, and with the two brightest of the Lesser Bear, to form two constellations like Ariadne's Crown, and to revolve one within the other, one following the movement of the other.

[2] Charles's Wain, the Great Bear, which never sets.

[3] The Lesser Bear may be imagined as having the shape of a horn, of which the small end is near the pole of the heavens around which the Primum Mobile revolves.

[4] When Ariadne died of grief because of her desertion by Theseus, her garland was changed into the constellation known as Ariadne's Crown.

[5] The Chiana is one of the most sluggish of the streams of Tuscany.

[6] Rejoicing in the change from dance and song to tranquillity for the sake of giving satisfaction to Dante.

Then the light in which the marvellous life of the poor man of God had been narrated to me broke the silence among those concordant deities, and said, "Since one straw is threshed, since its seed is now garnered, sweet love invites me to beat out the other. Thou believest that in the breast, wherefrom the rib was drawn to form the beautiful cheek whose taste costs dear to all the world, and in that which, pierced. by the lance, both after and before made such satisfaction

that it overcomes the balance of all sin, whatever of light it is allowed to human nature to have was all infused. by that Power which made one and the other; and therefore thou wonderest at that which I said above, when I told that the good which in the fifth light is inclosed had no second. Now open thine eyes to that which I answer to thee, and thou wilt see thy belief and my speech become in the truth as the centre in a circle.

"That which dies not and that which can die are naught but the splendor of that idea which in His love our Lord God brings to birth;[1] for that living Light which so proceeds from its Lucent Source that It is not disunited from It, nor from the Love which with them is intrined, through Its own bounty collects Its radiance, as it were mirrored, in nine subsistences, Itself eternally remaining one. Thence It descends to the ultimate potentialities, downward from act to act, becoming such that finally It makes naught save brief contingencies: and these contingencies I understand. to be the generated things which the heavens in their motion produce with seed and without.[2] The wax of these, and that which moulds it, are not of one mode, and therefore under the ideal stamp it shines now more now less;[3] whence it comes to pass that one same plant in respect to species bears better or worse fruit, and that ye are born with diverse dispositions. If the wax were exactly worked,[4] and the heavens were supreme in their power, the whole light of the seal would be apparent. But nature always gives it defective,[5] working like the artist who has the practice of his art and a hand that trembles. Nevertheless if the fervent Love disposes and imprints the clear Light of the primal Power, complete perfection is acquired here.[6] Thus of old the earth was made worthy of the complete perfection of the living being;[7] thus was the Virgin made impregnate;[8] so that I commend thy opinion that human nature never was, nor will be, what it was in those two persons.

[1] The creation of things eternal and things temporal alike is the splendid manifestation of the idea which the triune God, in His love, generated. The living light in the Son, emanating from its lucent source in the Father, in union with the love of the Holy Spirit, the three remaining always one, pours out its radiance through the nine orders of the Angelic Hierarchy, who distribute it by means of the Heavens of which they axe the Intelligences.

[2] Through the various movements and conjunctions of the Heavens, the creative light descends to the lowest elements, producing all the varieties of contingent things.

[3] The material of contingent or temporal things, and the influences which shape them, are of various sort, so that the splendor of the Divine idea is visible in them in different degree.

[4] If the material were always fit to receive the impression.

[5] Nature, the second Cause, never transmits the whole of the Creative light.

[6] If, however, the first Cause acts directly, — the fervent Love imprinting the clear Light of the primal Power, — there can be no imperfection in the created thing; it answers to the Divine idea.

[7] Thus, by the immediate operation of the Creator, the earth of which Adam was formed was made the perfect material for the f ormation of the creature with a living soul.

[8] In like manner, by the direct act of the Creator.

"Now, if I should not proceed further, 'Then how was this man without peer?' would thy words begin. But, in order that that which is not apparent may clearly appear, consider who he was, and the occasion which moved him to request, when it was said to him, 'Ask.' I have not so spoken that thou canst not clearly see that he was a king, who asked for wisdom, in order that he might be a worthy king; not to know the number of the motors here on high, or if necesse with a contingent ever made necesse;[1] non si est dare primum motum esse,[2] or if in the semicircle a triangle can be made so that it should not have one right angle.[3] Wherefore if thou notest this and what I said, a kingly prudence is that peerless seeing, on which the arrow of ray intention strikes.[4] And if thou directest clear eyes to the 'has arisen' thou wilt see it has respect only to kings, who are many, and the good are few. With this distinction[5] take thou my saying, and thus it can stand with that which thou believest of the first father, and of our Delight.[6] And let this be ever as lead to thy feet, to make thee move slow as a weary man, both to the YES and to the NO which thou seest not; for he is very low among the fools who affirms or denies without distinction, alike in the one and in the other case: because it happens, that oftentimes the current opinion bends in false direction, and then the inclination binds the understanding. Far more than vainly does he leave the bank, since he returns not such as be sets out, who fishes for the truth, and has not the art;[7] and of this are manifest proofs to the world Parmenides, Melissus, Bryson,[8] and many others who went on and knew not whither. So did Sabellius, and Arius,[9] and those fools who were as swords unto the Scriptures in making their straight faces crooked. Let not the people still be too secure in judgment, like him who reckons up the blades in the field ere they are ripe. For I have seen the briar first show itself stiff and wild all winter long, then bear the rose upon its top. And I have seen a bark ere now ran straight and swift across the sea through all its course, to perish at last at entrance of the harbor. Let not dame Bertha and master Martin, seeing one rob, and another make offering, believe to see them within the Divine counsel:[10] for the one may rise and the other may fall."

[1] If from two premises, one necessary and one contingent, a necessary conclusion is to be deduced.

[2] "If a prime motion is to be assumed," that is, a motion not the effect of another.

[3] He did not ask through idle curiosity to know the number of the Angels; nor for the solution of a logical puzzle, nor for that of a question in metaphysics, or of a problem in geometry.

[4] If thou understandest this comment on my former words, to see so much no second has arisen," my meaning will be clear that his vision was unmatched in respect to the wisdom which it behoves a king to possess.

[5] Thus distinguishing, it is apparent that Solomon is not brought into comparison, in respect to perfection of wisdom, with Adam or with Christ.

[6] Christ.

[7] Because he returns not only empty-handed, but with his mind perverted.

[8] Heathen philosophers who went astray in seeking for the truth.

[9] Sabellius denied the Trinity, Arius denied the Consubstantiality of the word.

[10] To understand the mystery of predestination.

CANTO XIV.

At the prayer of Beatrice, Solomon tells of the glorified body of the blessed after the Last Judgment. — Ascent to the Heaven of Mars. — Souls of the Soldiery of Christ in the form of a Cross with the figure of Christ thereon. — Hymn of the Spirits.

From the centre to the rim, and so from the rim to the centre, the water in a round vessel moves, according as it is struck from without or within. This which I say fell suddenly into my mind when the glorious life of Thomas became silent, because of the similitude which was born of his speech and that of Beatrice, whom after him it pleased thus to begin,[1] "This man has need, and he tells it not to you, neither with his voice nor as yet in thought, of going to the root of another truth. Tell him if the light wherewith your substance blossoms will remain with you eternally even as it is now; and if it remain, tell how, after you shall be again made visible, it will be possible that it hurt not your sight."[2]

[1] St. Thomas had spoken from his place in the ring which formed a circle around Beatrice and Dante; Beatrice now was speaking from the centre where she stood.

[2] The souls of the blessed are hidden in the light which emanates from them; after the resurrection of the body they will become visible, but then how will the bodily eyes endure such brightness?

As, when urged and drawn by greater pleasure, those who are dancing in a ring with one accord lift their voice and gladden their motions, so, at that prompt and devout petition, the holy circles showed new joy in their turning and in their marvellous melody. Whoso laments because man dies here in order to live thereabove, has not seen here the refreshment of the eternal rain.

That One and Two and Three which ever lives, and ever reigns in Three and Two and One, uncircumscribed, and circumscribing everything, was thrice sung by each of those spirits with such a melody that for every merit it would be a just reward. And I heard in the divinest light of the small circle a modest voice,[1] perhaps such as was that of the Angel to Mary, make answer, "As long as the festival of Paradise shall be, so long will our love radiate around us such a garment. Its brightness follows our ardor, the ardor our vision, and that is great in proportion as it receives of grace above its own worth. When the glorious and sanctified flesh shall be put on us again, our persons will be more pleasing through being all complete; wherefore whatever of gratuitous light the Supreme Good gives us will be increased, — light which enables us to see him; so that our vision needs must increase, our ardor increase which by that is kindled, our radiance increase which comes from this. But even as a coal which gives forth flame, and by a vivid glow surpasses it, so that it defends its own aspect,[2] thus

this effulgence, which already encircles us, will be vanquished in appearance by the flesh which all this while the earth covers. Nor will so great a light be able to fatigue us, for the organs of the body will be strong for everything which shall have power to delight us." So sudden and ready both one and the other choir seemed to me in saying "Amen," that truly they showed desire for their dead bodies, perhaps not only for themselves, but also for their mothers, for their fathers, and for the others who were dear before they became sempiternal flames.

[1] Probably that of Solomon, who in the tenth Canto is said to be "the light which is the most beautiful among us."

[2] The coal is seen glowing through the flame.

And lo! round about, of a uniform brightness, arose a lustre, outside that which was there, like an horizon which is growing bright. And even as at rise of early evening new appearances begin in the heavens, so that the sight seems and seems not true, it seemed to me that there I began to see new subsistences, and a circle forming outside the other two circumferences. O true sparkling of the Holy Spirit, how sudden and glowing it became to mine eyes, which, vanquished, endured it not! But Beatrice showed herself to me so beautiful and smiling that she must be left among those sights which have not followed my memory.

Thence my eyes regained power to raise themselves again, and I saw myself alone with my Lady transferred to higher salvation.[1]

That I was more uplifted I perceived clearly by the fiery smile of the star, which seemed to me ruddier than its wont. With all my heart and with that speech which is one in all men,[2] I made to God a holocaust such as was befitting to the new grace; and the ardor of the sacrifice was not yet exhausted in my breast when I knew that offering had been accepted and propitious; for with such great glow and such great ruddiness splendors appeared to me within two rays, that I said, "O Helios,[3] who dost so array them!"

[1] To a higher grade of blessedness, that of the Fifth Heaven.

[2] The unuttered voice of the soul.

[3] Whether Dante forms this word from the Hebrew Eli (my God), or adopts the Greek {Greek here} (sun), is uncertain.

Even as, marked out by less and greater lights, the Galaxy so whitens between the poles of the world that it indeed makes the wise to doubt,[1] thus, constellated in the depth of Mars, those rays made the venerable sign which joinings of quadrants in a circle make. Here my memory overcomes my genius, for that Cross was flashing forth Christ, so that I know not to find worthy comparison.

But be who takes his cross and follows Christ will yet excuse me for that which I omit, when in that brightness he beholds Christ gleaming.

[1] “Concerning the GaJaxy philosophers have held different opinions.” — Convito, 115.

From horn to horn[1] and between the top and the base lights were moving, brightly scintillating as they met together and in their passing by. Thus here[2] are seen, straight and athwart, swift and slow, changing appearance, the atoms of bodies, long and short, moving through the sunbeam, wherewith sometimes the shade is striped which people contrive with skill and art for their protection. And as a viol or harp, strung in harmony of many strings, makes a sweet tinkling to one by whom the tune is not caught, thus from the lights which there appeared to me a melody was gathered through the Cross, which rapt me without understanding of the hymn. Truly was I aware that it was of holy praise, because there came to me “Arise and conquer!” as unto one who understands not, and yet bears. I was so enamoured therewith that until then had not been anything which had fettered me with such sweet bonds. Perchance my word appears too daring, in setting lower the pleasure from the beautiful eyes, gazing into which my desire has repose. But he who considers that the living seals[3] of every beauty have more effect the higher they are, and that I there had not turned round to those eyes, can excuse me for that whereof I accuse myself in order to excuse myself, and see that I speak truth; for the holy pleasure is not here excluded, because it becomes the purer as it mounts.

[1] From arm to arm of the cross.

[2] On earth.

[3] The Heavens, which are “the seal of mortal wax” (Canto VIII.), increase in power as they are respectively nearer the Empyrean, so that the joy in each, as it is higher up, is greater than in the heavens below. To this time Dante had felt no joy equal to that afforded him by this song. But a still greater joy awaited him in the eyes of Beatrice, to which, since he entered the Fifth Heaven, he had not turned, but which there, as elsewhere, were to afford the supreme delight.

CANTO XV.

Dante is welcomed by his ancestor, Cacciaguida. — Cacciaguida tells of his family, and of the simple life of Florence in the old days.

A benign will, wherein the love which righteously inspires always manifests itself, as cupidity does in the evil will, imposed silence on that sweet lyre, and quieted the holy strings which the right hand of heaven slackens and draws tight. How unto just petitions shall those substances be deaf, who, in order to give me wish to pray unto them, were concordant in silence? Well is it that be endlessly should grieve who, for the love of thing which endures not eternally, despoils him of that love.

As, through the tranquil and pure evening skies, a sudden fire shoots from time to time, moving the eyes which were at rest, and seems to be a star which changes place, except that from the region where it is kindled nothing is lost, and it lasts short while, so, from the arm which extends on the right, to the foot of that Cross, ran a star of the constellation which is resplendent there. Nor from its ribbon did the gem depart, but through the radial strip it ran along and seemed like fire behind alabaster. Thus did the pious shade of Anchises advance (if our greatest Muse merits belief), when in Elysium he perceived. his son.[1]

[1] "And he (Anchises), when he saw Aeneas advancing to meet him over the grass, stretched forth both hands eagerly, and the tears poured down his cheeks, and he cried out, 'Art thou come at length?" — Aeneid, vi. 684-7.

"O sanguis meus! o superinfusa gratia Dei! sicut tibi, cui bis unquam coeli janua reclusa?"[1] Thus that light; whereat I gave heed to it; then I turned my sight to my Lady, and on this side and that I was wonderstruck; for within her eyes was glowing such a smile, that with my own I thought to touch the depth of my grace and of my Paradise.

[1] "O blood of mine! O grace of God poured from above! To whom, as to thee, was ever the gate of Heaven twice opened?"

Then, gladsome to hear and to see, the spirit joined to his beginning things which I understood not, he spoke so profoundly. Nor did he hide himself to me by choice, but by necessity, for his conception was set above the mark of mortals. And when the bow of his ardent affection was so relaxed that his speech descended towards the mark of our understanding, the first thing that was understood by me was, "Blessed be Thou, Trinal, and One who in my offspring art so courteous." And he went on, "Grateful and long hunger, derived from reading in the great vouime where white or dark is never changed,[1] thou hast relieved, my son, within this light in which I speak to thee, thanks to Her who

clothed thee with plumes for the lofty flight. Thou believest that thy thought flows to me from that which is first; even as from the unit, if that be known, ray out the five and six. And therefore who I am, and why I appear to thee more joyous than any other in this glad crowd, thou askest me not. Thou believest the truth; for the less and the great of this life gaze upon the mirror in which, before thou thinkest, thou dost display thy thought. But in order that the sacred Love, in which I watch with perpetual sight, and which makes me thirst with sweet desire, may be fulfilled the better, let thy voice, secure, bold, and glad, utter the wish, utter the desire, to which my answer is already decreed."

[1] In the mind of God, in which there is no change.

I turned me to Beatrice, and she heard before I spoke, and smiled to me a sign which made the wings to my desire grow: and I began thus: "When the first Equality appeared to you, the affection and the intelligence became of one weight for each of you; because the Sun which illumined and warmed you is of such equality in its heat and in its light that all similitudes are defective. But will and discourse in mortals, for the reason which is manifest to you, are diversely feathered in their wings.[1] Wherefore I, who am mortal, feel myself in this inequality,[2] and therefore I give not thanks, save with my heart, for thy paternal welcome. Truly I beseech thee, living topaz that dost ingem this precious jewel, that thou make me content with thy name?" "O leaf of mine, in whom, while only awaiting, I took pleasure, I was thy root." Such a beginning he, answering, made to me. Then he said to me: "He from whom thy family is named,[3] and who for a hundred years and more has circled the mountain on the first ledge, was my son and was thy great-grandsire. Truly it behoves that thou shorten for him his long fatigue with thy works. Florence, within the ancient circle wherefrom she still takes both tierce and nones,[4] was abiding in sober and modest peace. She had not necklace nor coronal, nor dames with ornamented shoes, nor girdle which was more to be looked at than the person. Not yet did the daughter at her birth cause fear to the father, for the time and dowry did not evade measure on this side and that.[5] She had not houses void of families;[6] Sardanapalus had not yet arrived[7] there to show what can be done in a chamber. Not yet by your Uccellatoio was Montemalo surpassed, which, as it has been surpassed in its rise, shall be so in its fall.[8] I saw Bellineoin Berti[9] go girt with leather and bone,[10] and his dame come from her mirror without a painted face. And I saw them of the Nerli, and them of the Vecchio,[11] contented with the uncovered skin,[12] and their dames with the spindle and the distaff. O fortunate women! Every one was sure of her burial place;[13] and as yet no one was deserted in her bed for France.[14] One over the cradle kept her careful watch, and, comforting, she used the idiom

which first amuses fathers and mothers. Another, drawing the tresses from her distaff, told tales to her household of the Trojans, and of Fiesole, and of Rome.[15] A Cianghella,[16] a Lapo Salterello would then have been held as great a marvel as Cincinnatus or Cornelia would be now.

[1] But will and the discourse of reason, corresponding to affection and intelligence, are unequal in mortals, owing to their imperfection.

[2] Which makes it impossible for me to give full expression to my gratitude and affection.

[3] Alighiero, from whom, it would appear from his station in Purgatory, Dante inherited the sin of pride, as well as his name.

[4] The bell of the church called the Badia, or Abbey, which stood within the old walls of Florence, rang daily the hours for worship, and measured the time for the Florentines. Tierce is the first division of the canonical hours of the day, from six to nine; nones, the third, from twelve to three.

[5] They were not married so young as now, nor were such great dowries required for them.

[6] Palaces too large for their occupants, built for ostentation.

[7] The luxury and effeminacy of Sardanapalus were proverbial.

[8] Not yet was the view from Montemalo, or Monte Mario, of Rome in its splendor surpassed by that of Florence from the height of Uccellatoio; and the fall of Florence shall be greater even than that of Rome.

[9] Bellincion Berti was “an honorable citizen of Florence,” says Giovanni Villani; “a noble soldier,” adds Benvenuto da Imola. He was father of the “good Gualdrada.” See Hell, XVI.

[10] With a plain leathern belt fastened with a clasp of bone.

[11] Two ancient and honored families.

[12] Clothed in garments of plain dressed skin not covered with cloth.

[13] Not fearing to die in exile.

[14] Left by her husband seeking fortune in France, or other for. eign lands.

[15] These old tales may be read in the first book of Villani’s Chronicle.

[16] “Mulier arrogantissima et intolerabilis . . . multum lubrice vixit,” says Benvenuto da Imola, who describes Lapo Salterello as temerarius et pravus civis, vir litigiosus et linguosus.”

“To such a tranquil, to such a beautiful life of citizens, to such a trusty citizenship, to such a sweet inn, Mary, called on with loud cries,[1] gave me; and in your ancient Baptistery I became at once a Christian and Cacciaguida. Moronto was my brother, and Eliseo; my dame came to me from the valley of the Po, and thence was thy surname. Afterward I followed the emperor Conrad.[2] and he belted me of his soldiery,[3] so much by good deeds did I come into his favor. Following him I went against the iniquity of that law[4] whose people usurp your right,[5] though fault of the shepherd. There by that base folk was I released from the deceitful world, the love of which pollutes many souls, and I came from martyrdom to this peace.”

[1] The Virgin, called on in the pains of childbirth.

[2] Conrad III. of Suabia. In 1143 he joined in the second Crusade.

[3] Made me a belted knight.

[4] The law of Mahomet.

[5] The Holy Land, by right belonging to the Christians.

CANTO XVI.

The boast of blood. — Cacciaguida continues his discourse concerning the old and the new Florence.

O thou small nobleness of our blood! If thou makest folk glory in thee down here, where our affection languishes, it will nevermore be a marvel to me; for there, where appetite is not perverted, I mean in Heaven, I myself gloried in thee. Truly art thou a cloak which quickly shortens, so that, if day by day it be not pieced, Time goeth round about it with his shears.

With the YOU,[1] which Rome first tolerated, in which her family least perseveres,[2] my words began again. Whereat Beatrice, who was a little withdrawn,[3] smiling, seemed like her[4] who coughed at the first fault that is written of Guenever. I began, "You are my father, you give me all confidence to speak; you lift me so that I am more than I. Through so many streams is my mind filled with gladness that it makes of itself a joy, in that it can bear this and not burst.[5] Tell me then, beloved first source of me, who were your ancestors, and what were the years that were numbered in your boyhood. Tell me of the sheepfold of St. John,[6] how large it was then, and who were the people within it worthy of the highest seats."

[1] The plural pronoun, used as a mark of respect. This usage was introduced in the later Roman Empire.

[2] The Romans no longer show respect to those worthy of it.

[3] Beatrice stands a little aside, theology having no part in this colloquy. She smiles, not reproachfully, at Dante's vainglory.

[4] The Dame de Malehault, who coughed at seeing the first kiss given by Lancelot to Guenever. The incident is not told in any of the printed versions of the Romance of Lancelot, but it has been found by Mr. Paget Toynbee in several of the manuscripts.

[5] Rejoices that it has capacity to endure such great joy.

[6] Florence, whose patron saint was St. John the Baptist.

As a coal quickens to flame at the blowing of the winds, so I saw that light become resplendent at my blandishments, and as it became more beautiful to my eyes, so with voice more dulcet and soft, but not with this modern speech, it said to me, "From that clay on which Ave was said, unto the birth in which my mother, who. now is sainted, was lightened of me with whom she was burdened, this fire had come to its Lion[1] five hundred, fifty, and thirty times to reinflame itself beneath his paw.[2] My ancestors and I were born in the place where the last ward is first found by him who runs in your annual game.[3] Let it suffice to hear this of my elders. Who they were, and whence they came thither, it is more becoming to leave untold than to recount.

[1] — Mars
As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast. — Maud,
part III. The Lion is the sign Leo in the Zodiac, appropriate to
Mars by supposed conformity of disposition.

[2] Five hundred and eighty revolutions of Mars are accomplished in a little more than ten hundred and ninety years.

[3] The place designated was the boundary of the division of the city called that of "the Gate of St. Peter," where the Corso passes by the Mercato Vecchio or Old Market. The races were run along the Corso on the 24th June, the festival of St. John the Baptist.

"All those able to bear arms who at that time were there, between Mars and the Baptist,[1] were the fifth of them who are living. But the citizenship, which is now mixed with Campi and with Certaldo and with Figghine,[2] was to be seen pure in the lowest artisan. Oh, how much better it would be that those folk of whom I speak were neighbors, and to have your confine at Galluzzo and at Trespiano,[3] than to have them within, and to endure the stench of the churl of Aguglione,[4] and of him of Signa, who already has his eye sharp for barratry!

[1] Between the Ponte Vecchio, at the head of which stood the statue of Mars, and the Baptistery, — two points marking the circuit of the ancient walls.

[2] Small towns not far from Florence, from which, as from many others, there had been emigration to the thriving city, to the harm of its own people.

[3] It would have been better to keep these people at a distance, as neighbors, and to have narrow bounds for the territory of the city.

[4] The churl of Aguglione was, according to Benvenuto da Imola, a lawyer named Baldo, "qui fuit magnus canis." He became one of the priors of Florence in 1311. He of Signa is supposed to have been one Bonifazio, who, says Buti, "sold his favors and offices."

"If the people which most degenerates in the world[1] had not been as a stepdame unto Caesar, but like a mother benignant to her son, there is one now a Florentine[2] who changes money and traffics, who would have returned to Simifonti, there where his grandsire used to go begging. Montemurlo would still belong to its Counts, the Cerchi would be in the parish of Acone, and perhaps the Buondelmonti in Valdigreve.[3] The confusion of persons has always been the beginning of the harm of the city, as in the body the food which is added.[4] And a blind bull falls more headlong than the blind lamb; and oftentimes one sword cuts more and better than five. If thou regardest Luni and Urbisaglia,[5] how they have gone, and how Chiusi and Sinigaglia are going their way after them, to hear how families are undone will not appear to thee a strange thing or a bard, since cities have their term.[6] Your things all have their death even as ye; but it is concealed in some that last long, while lives are short. And as the revolution of the heaven of the Moon covers and uncovers the shores without a pause, so fortune does with Florence. Wherefore what I shall tell of the high Florentines, whose fame is hidden by time, should not appear to thee a marvellous thing. I saw the Ughi, and I saw the Catellini, Filippi, Greci, Ormanni, and Alberichi, even in their decline, illustrious citizens; and I saw, as great as they were old,

with those of the Sannella, those of the Area, and Soldanieri, and Ardinghi, and Bostiebi.[7] Over the gate which at present is laden with new felony[8] of such weight that soon there will be jettison from the bark,[9] were the Ravignani, from whom the Count Guido is descended,[10] and whosoever since has taken the name of the high Bellincione. He of the Pressa knew already bow one needs to rule, and Galigaio already had in his house the gilded hilt and pummel.[11] Great were already the column of the Vair,[12] the Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifanti, and Barucci, and Galli, and they who blush for the bushel.[13] The stock from which the Calfucci sprang was already great, and already the Sizii. and Arrigucci had been drawn to curule chairs.[14] Oh how great did I see those who have been undone by their pride![15] and the balls of gold[16] made Florence flourish with all their great deeds. So did the fathers of those who always,when your church is vacant, become fat, staying in consistory.[17] The overweening race which is as a dragon behind him who flies, and to him who shows tooth or purse is gentle as a lamb,[18] already was coming up, but from small folk, so that it pleased not Ubertin Donato that his father-in-law should afterwards make him their relation.[19] Already had Caponsacco descended into the market place down from Fiesole, and already was Giuda a good citizen, and Infangato.[20] I will tell a thing incredible and true: into the little circle one entered by a gate which was named for those of the Pear.[21] Every one who bears the beautiful ensign of the great baron[22] whose name and whose praise the feast of Thomas revives, from him had knighthood and privilege; although to-day he who binds it with a border unites himself with the populace.[23] Already there were Gualterotti and Importuni; and Borgo[24] would now be more quiet, if they had gone hung for new neighbors. The house of which was born your weeping,[25] through its just indignation which has slain you, and put an end to your glad living, was honored, both itself and its consorts. O Buondelmonte, how ill didst thou flee its nuptials through the persuasions of another! [26] Many would be glad who now are sorrowful, if God had conceded thee to the Ema[27] the first time that thou camest to the city. But it behoved that Florence in her last peace should offer a victim to that broken stone which guards the bridge.[28]

[1] If the clergy had not quarrelled with the Emperor, bringing about factions and disturbances in the world.

[2] “I have not discovered who this is,” says Buti.

[3] The Conti Guidi had been compelled to sell to the Florentines their stronghold of Montemurlo, because they could not defend it from the Pistoians. The Cerchi and the Buondelmonti had been forced by the Florentine Commune to give up their fortresses and to take up their abode in the city, where they became powerful, and where the bitterness of intestine discord and party strife had been greatly enhanced by their quarrels.

[4] Food added to that already in process of digestion.

[5] Cities once great, now fallen.

[6] Cities longer-lived than families.

[7] All once great families, but now extinct, or fallen.

[8] Above the gate of St. Peter rose the walls of the abode of the Cerchi, the head of the White faction.

[9] The casting overboard was the driving out of the leaders of the Whites in 1302.

[10] The Count Guido married Gualdrada, the daughter of Bellincione Berti.

[11] Symbols of knighthood; the use of gold in their accoutrements being reserved for knights.

[12] The family of the Pigli, whose scatcheon was, in heraldic terms, gules, a pale, vair; in other words, a red shield divided longitudinally by a stripe of the heraldic representation of the fur called vair.

[13] The Chiaramontesi, one of whom in the old days, being the officer in charge of the sale of salt for the Commune, had cheated both the Commune and the people by using a false measure. See Purgatory, Canto XII.

[14] To high civic office.

[15] The Uberti, the great family of which Farinata was the most renowned member.

[16] The Lamberti, who bore golden balls on their shields.

[17] The Visdomini, patrons of the Bishopric of Florence, who, after the death of a bishop, by deferring the appointment of his successor grew fat on the episcopal revenues.

[18] The Adimari. Benvenuto da Imola reports that one Boccacino Adimari, after Dante's banishment, got possession of his property, and always afterward was his bitter enemy.

[19] Ubertin Donato married a daughter of Bellincion Berti, and was displeased that her sister should afterwards be given to one of the Adimari.

[20] There seems to be a touch of humor in these three names of "Head in bag," "Judas," and "Bemired."

[21] The Peruzzi, who bore the pear as a charge upon their scutcheon. The incredible thing may have been that the people were so simple and free from jealousy as to allow a public gate to bear the name of a private family. The "little circle" was the circle of the old walls.

[22] Hugh, imperial vicar of Tuscany in the time of Otho II. and Otho III. He died on St. Thomas's Day, December 21st, 1006, and was buried in the Badia, the foundation of which is ascribed to him; there his monument is still to be seen, and there of old, on the anniversary of his death, a discourse in his praise was delivered. Several families, whose heads were knighted by him, adopted his arms, with some distinctive addlition. His scutcheon was paly of four, argent and gules.

[23] Giano della Bella, the great leader of the Florentine commonalty in the latter years of the 13th century. He bore the arms of Hugh with a border of gold.

[24] The Borgo Sant' Apostolo, the quarter of the city in which these families lived, would have been more tranquil if the Buondelmonti had not come to take up their abode in it.

[25] The Amidei, who were the source of much of the misery of Florence, through their long and bitter feud with the Buondelmonti, by which the whole city was divided.

[26] The quarrel between the Amidei and the Buondelmonti arose from the slighting by Buondelmonto dei Buondelmonti of a daughter of the former house, to whom he was betrothed, for a daughter of the Donati, induced thereto by her mother. This was in 1215.

[27] The Ema, a little stream that has to be crossed in coming from Montebuono, the home of the Buondelmonti, to Florence.

[28] That victim was Buondelmonte himself, slain by the outraged Amidei, at the foot of the mutilated statue of Mars, which stood at the end of the Ponte Vecchio.

"With these families, and with others with them, I saw Florence in such repose that she had no occasion why she should weep. With these families I saw

her people so glorious and so just, that the lily was never set reversed upon the staff, nor had it been made blood-red by division."[1]

[1] The banner of Florence had never fallen into the hands of her enemies, to be reversed by them in scoff. Of old it had borne a white lily in a red field, but in 1250, when the Ghibellines were expelled, the Guelphs adopted a red lily in a white field, and this became the ensign of the Commune.

CANTO XVII.

Dante questions Cacciaguida as to his fortunes. — Cacciaguida replies, foretelling the exile of Dante, and the renown of his Poem.

As he who still makes fathers chary toward their sons[1] came to Clymene, to ascertain concerning that which he had heard against himself; such was I, and such was I perceived to be both by Beatrice, and by the holy lamp which first for my sake had changed its station. Whereon my Lady said to me, “Send forth the flame of thy desire so that it may issue sealed well by the internal stamp; not in order that our knowledge may increase through thy speech, but that thou accustom thyself to tell thy thirst, so that one may give thee drink.”

[1] Phaethon, son of Clymene by Apollo, having been told that Apollo was not his father, went to his mother to ascertain the truth.

“O dear plant of me, who so upliftest thyself that, even as earthly minds see that two obtuse angles are not contained in a triangle, so thou, gazing upon the point to which all times are present, seest contingent things, ere in themselves they are; while I was conjoined with Virgil up over the mountain which cures the souls, and while descending in the world of the dead, grave words were said to me of my future life; although I feel myself truly four-square against the blows of chance. Wherefore my wish would be content by hearing what sort of fortune is drawing near me; for arrow foreseen comes more slack.” Thus said I unto that same light which before had spoken to me, and as Beatrice willed was my wish confessed.

Not with ambiguous terms in which the foolish folk erst were entangled,[1] ere yet the Lamb of God which taketh away sins had been slain, but with clear words and with distinct speech that paternal love, hid and apparent by his own proper smile, made answer: “Contingency, which extends not outside the volume of your matter, is all depicted in the eternal aspect. Therefrom, however, it takes not necessity, more than from the eye in which it is mirrored does a ship which descends with the downward current. Thence, even as sweet harmony comes to the ear from an organ, comes to my sight the time that is preparing for thee. As Hippolytus departed from Athens, by reason of his pitiless and perfidious stepmother, so out from Florence thou must needs depart. This is willed, this is already sought for, and soon it shall be brought to pass, by him I who designs it there where every day Christ is bought and sold. The blame will follow the injured party, in outcry, as it is wont; but the vengeance will be testimony to the truth which dispenses it. Thou shalt leave everything beloved most dearly; and this is the arrow which the bow of exile first shoots. Thou shalt prove how the

bread of others savors of salt, and how the descending and the mounting of another's stairs is a hard path. And that which will heaviest weigh upon thy shoulders will be the evil and foolish company[2] with which into this valley thou shalt fall; which all ungrateful, all senseless, and impious will turn against thee; but short while after, it, not thou, shall have the forehead red therefor. Of its bestiality, its own procedure will give the proof; so that it will be seemly for thee to have made thyself a party by thyself.

[1] Not with riddles such as the oracles gave out before they fell silent at the coming of Christ.

[2] Boniface VIII.

[3] The other Florentine exiles of the party of the Whites.

"Thy first refuge and first inn shall be the courtesy of the great Lombard,[1] who upon the ladder bears the holy bird, who will turn such benign regard on thee that, in doing and in asking, between you two, that will be first, which between others is the slowest. With him shalt thou see one,[2] who was so impressed, at his birth, by this strong star, that his deeds will be notable. Not yet are the people aware of him, because of his young age; for only nine years have these wheels revolved around him. But ere the Gascon cheat the lofty Henry[3] some sparkles of his virtue shall appear, in caring not for silver nor for toils. His magnificences shall hereafter be so known, that his enemies shall not be able to keep their tongues mute about them. Await thou for him, and for his benefits; by him shall many people be transformed, rich and mendicant changing condition. And thou shalt bear hence written of him in thy mind, but thou shalt not tell it;" and he said things incredible to those who shall be present. Then he added, "Son, these are the glosses on what was said to thee; behold the ambushes which are bidden behind few revolutions. Yet would I not that thou bate thy neighbors, because thy life hath a future far beyond the punishment of their perfidies."

[[1] Bartolommeo della Scala, lord of Verona, whose armorial bearings were the imperial eagle upon a ladder (scala).

[2] Can Grande della Scala, the youngest brother of Bartolommeo, and finally his successor as lord of Verona.

[3] Before Pope Clement V., under whom the Papal seat was established at Avignon, shall deceive the Emperor, Henry VIL, by professions of support, while secretly promoting opposition to his expedition to Italy in 1310.

When by its silence that holy soul showed it had finished putting the woof into that web which I had given it warped, I began, as he who, in doubt, longs for counsel from a person who sees, and uprightly wills, and loves: "I see well, my Father, how the time spurs on toward me to give me such a blow as is heaviest to him who most deserts himself; wherefore it is good that I arm me with foresight, so that if the place most dear be taken from me, I should not lose

the others by my songs. Down through the world of endless bitterness, and over the mountain from whose fair summit the eyes of my Lady have lifted me, and afterward through the heavens from light to light, I have learned that which, if I repeat it, shall be to many a savor keenly sour; and if I am a timid friend to the truth I fear to lose life among those who will call this time the olden." The light, in which my treasure which I had found there was smiling, first became flashing as a mirror of gold in the sunbeam; then it replied, "A conscience dark, either with its own or with another's shame, will indeed feel thy speech as harsh; but nevertheless, all falsehood laid aside, make thy whole vision manifest, and let the scratching be even where the itch is; for if at the first taste thy voice shall be molestful, afterwards, when it shall be digested, it will leave vital nourishment. This cry of thine shall do as the wind, which heaviest strikes the loftiest summits; and that will be no little argument of honor. Therefore to thee have been shown within these wheels, upon the mountain, and in the woeful valley, only the souls which are known of fame. For the mind of him who bears rests not, nor confirms its faith, through an example which has its root unknown and hidden, nor by other argument which is not apparent."

CANTO XVIII.

The Spirits in the Cross of Mars. — Ascent to the Heaven of Jupiter. — Words shaped in light upon the planet by the Spirits. — Denunciation of the avarice of the Popes.

Now was that blessed mirror enjoying alone its own word,[1] and I was tasting mine, tempering the bitter with the sweet. and that Lady who to God was leading me said, “Change thy thought; think that I am near to Him who lifts the burden of every wrong.” I turned me round at the loving sound of my Comfort, and what love I then saw in the holy eyes, I here leave it; not only because I distrust my own speech, but because of the memory which cannot return so far above itself, unless another guide it. Thus much of that moment can I recount, that, again beholding her, my affection was free from every other desire.

[1] Its own thoughts in contemplation.

While the eternal pleasure, which was raying directly upon Beatrice, from her fair face was contenting me with its second aspect,[1] vanquishing me with the light of a smile, she said to me, “Turn thee, and listen, for not only in my eyes is Paradise.”

[1] Its aspect reflected from the eyes of Beatrice.

As sometimes here one sees the affection in the countenance, if it be so great that by it the whole soul is occupied, so in the flaming of the holy effulgence to which I turned me, I recognized the will in it still to speak somewhat with me. It began, “In this fifth threshold of the tree, which lives from its top, and always bears fruit, and never loses leaf, are blessed spirits, who below, before they came to heaven, were of great renown, so that every Muse would be rich with them. Therefore gaze upon the arms of the Cross; he, whom I shall name, will there do that which within a cloud its own swift fire does.” At the naming of Joshua, even as he did it, I saw a light drawn over the Cross; nor was the word noted by me before the act. And at the name of the lofty Maccabeus[1] I saw another move revolving, and gladness was the whip of the top. Thus for Charlemagne and for Roland my attentive gaze followed two of them, as the eye follows its falcon as be flies. Afterward William, and Renouard,[2] and the duke Godfrey,[3] and Robert Guiscard[4] drew my sight over that Cross. Then, moving, and mingling among the other lights, the soul which had spoken with me showed me how great an artist it was among the singers of heaven.

[1] Judas Maccabeus, who “ was renowned to the utmost part of the earth.” See I Maccabees, ii-ix.

[2] Two heroes of romance, paladins of Charlemagne.

[3] Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of the first crusade.

[4] The founder of the Norman kingdom of Naples.

I turned me round to my right side to see my duty signified in Beatrice either by speech or by act, and I saw her eyes so clear, so joyous, that her semblance surpassed her other and her latest wont. And even as, through feeling more delight in doing good, a man from day to day becomes aware that his virtue is advancing, so I became aware that my circling round together with the heaven had increased its are, seeing that miracle more adorned. And such as is the change, in brief passage of time, in a pale lady, when her countenance is unlading the load of bashfulness, such was there in my eyes, when I had turned, because of the whiteness of the temperate sixth star which had received, me within itself.[1] I saw, within that torch of Jove, the sparkling of the love which was there shape out our speech to my eyes. And as birds, risen from the river-bank, as if rejoicing together over their food, make of themselves a troop now round, now of some other shape, so within the lights[2] holy creatures were singing as they flew, and made of themselves now D, now I, now L, in their proper shapes.[3] First, singing, they moved to their melody, then becoming one of these characters, they stopped a little, and were silent.

[1] The change is from the red light of Mars to the white light of Jupiter, a planet called by astrologers the “temperate” star, as lying between the heat of Mars and the coldness of Saturn.

[2] The sparkles of the love which was there.

[3] The first letters of Diligite, as shortly appears.

O divine Pegasea,[1] who makest the wits of men glorious, and renderest them long-lived, as they, through thee, the cities and the kingdoms, illume me with thyself that I may set in relief their shapes, as I have conceived them I let thy power appear in these brief verses!

[1] An appellation appropriate to any one of the Muses (whose fountain Hippocrene sprang at the stamp of Pegasus); here probably applied to Urania, already once invoked by the poet (Purgatory, XXIX.).

They showed themselves then in five times seven vowels and consonants; and I noted the parts as they seemed spoken to me. Diligite justitiam were first verb and noun of all the picture; qui judicatis terram[1] were the last. Then in the M of the fifth word they remained arranged, so that Jove seemed silver patterned there with gold. And I saw other lights descending where the top of the M was, and become quiet there, singing, I believe, the Good which moves them to itself. Then, as on the striking of burnt logs rise innumerable sparks, wherefrom the foolish are wont to draw auguries, there seemed to rise again thence more than a thousand lights, and mount, one much and one little, according as the Sun which

kindles them allotted them; and, each having become quiet in its place, I saw the head and the neck of an eagle represented by that patterned fire. He who paints there, has none who may guide Him, but Himself guides, and by Him is inspired that virtue which is form for the nests.[2] The rest of the blessed spirits, which at first seemed content to be enlilied[3] on the M, with a slight motion followed out the imprint.

[1] "Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth." — Wisdom of Solomon, i. 1.

[2] The words are obscure; they may mean that a virtue, or instinct, similar to that which teaches the bird to build its nest, directed the shaping of these letters.

[3] Ingigliare, a word invented by Dante, and used only by him. The meaning is that these spirits seemed first to form a lily on the M.

O sweet star, how great gems and how many showed to me that our justice is the effect of that heaven which thou ingemmest! Wherefore I pray the Mind, in which thy motion and thy virtue have their source, that It regard whence issues the smoke which spoils thy radiance, so that now a second time It may be wroth at the buying and selling within the temple which was walled with signs and martyrdoms. O soldiery of the Heaven on which I gaze, pray ye for those who are on earth all gone astray after the bad example! Of old it was the wont to make war with swords, but now it is made by taking, now here now there, the bread which the piteous Father locks up from none.

But thou that writest only in order to cancel,[1] bethink thee that Peter and Paul, who died for the vineyard which thou art laying waste, are still alive. Thou mayest indeed say, "I have my desire set so on him who willed to live alone, and for a dance was dragged to martyrdom[2] that I know not the Fisherman nor Paul."

[1] The Pope, who writes censures, excommunications, and the like, only that he may be paid to cancel thorn.

[2] The image of St. John Baptist was on the florin, which was the chief object of desire of the Pope.

CANTO XIX.

The voice of the Eagle. — It speaks of the mysteries of Divine justice; of the necessity of Faith for salvation; of the sins of certain kings.

The beautiful image, which in its sweet fruition was making joyful the interwoven souls, appeared before me with outspread wings. Each soul appeared a little ruby on which a ray of the sun glowed so enkindled that it reflected him into My eyes. And that which it now behoves me to describe, no voice ever reported, nor ink wrote, nor was it ever conceived by the fancy; for I saw, and also heard the beak speaking, and uttering with the voice both I and MY, when in conception it was WE and OUR.[1]

[1] An image of the concordant will of the Just, and of the unity of Justice under the Empire.

And it began, “Through being just and pious am I here exalted to that glory which lets not itself be conquered by desire; and on earth I left my memory such that the evil people there commend it, but continue not its story.” Thus a single heat makes itself felt from many embers, even as from many loves a single sound issued from that image. Wherefore I thereon, “O perpetual flowers of the eternal gladness, which make all your odors seem to me as only one, deliver me, by your breath, from the great fast which has held me long in hunger, not finding for it any food on earth. Well I know that if the Divine Justice makes any realm in heaven its mirror, yours does not apprehend it through a veil.[1] Ye know how intently I address myself to listen; ye know what is that doubt[2] which is so old a fast to me.”

[1] Here, if anywhere, the Divine Justice is reflected.

[2] Concerning the Divine justice.

As a falcon which, issuing from his hood, moves his head, and claps his wings, showing desire, and making himself fine; so I saw this ensign, which was woven of praise of the Divine Grace, become, with songs such as he knows who thereabove rejoices. Then it began, “He who turned the compasses at the verge of the world, and distributed within it so much occult and manifest, could not so imprint His Power on all the universe that His Word should not remain in infinite excess.[1] And this makes certain that the first proud one, who was the top of every creature, through not awaiting light, fell immature.[2] And hence it appears, that every lesser nature is a scant receptacle for that Good which has no end and measures Itself by Itself. Wherefore our vision, which needs must be some ray of the Mind with which all things are full, cannot in its own nature be

so potent that it may not discern its origin to be far beyond that which is apparent to it.[3] Therefore the sight which your world receives[4] penetrates into the eternal justice as the eye into the sea; which, though from the shore it can see the bottom, on the ocean sees it not, and nevertheless it is there, but the depth conceals it. There is no light but that which comes from the serene which is never clouded; nay, there is darkness, either shadow of the flesh, or its poison.[5] The hiding place is now open enough to thee, which concealed from thee the living Justice concerning which thou madest such frequent question;[6] for thou saidest,— 'A man is born on the bank of the Indus, and no one is there who may speak of Christ, nor who may read, nor who may write; and all his wishes and acts are good so far as human reason sees, without sin in life or in speech. He dies unbaptized, and without faith: where is this Justice which condemns him? where is his sin if he does not believe?' Now who art thou, that wouldst sit upon a bench to judge a thousand miles away with the short vision of a single span? Assuredly, for him who subtilizes with me,[7] if the Scripture were not above you, there would be occasion for doubting to a marvel. Oh earthly animals! oh gross minds![8]

[1] The Word, that is, the thought or wisdom of God, infinitely exceeds the expression of it in the creation.

[2] Lucifer fell through pride, fancying himself, though a created being, equal to his Creator. Had he awaited the full light of Divine grace, he would have recognized his own inferiority.

[3] Our vision is not powerful enough to reach the source from which it proceeds.

[4] It is the gift of God.

[5] There is no light but that which proceeds from God, the light of Revelation. Lacking this, man is in the darkness of ignorance, which is in the shadow of the flesh, or of sin, which is its poison.

[6] The hiding place is the depth of the Divine decrees, which man cannot penetrate, but the justice of which in his self-confidence he undertakes to question.

[7] With me, the symbol of justice.

[8] The Scriptures teach you that "the judgments of God are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out;" why, foolish, do ye disregard them?

"The primal Will, which of Itself is good, never is moved from Itself, which is the Supreme Good. So much is just as is accordant to It; no created good draws It to itself, but It, raying forth, is the cause of that good."

As above her nest the stork circles, after she has fed her brood, and as he who has been fed looks up at her, such became (and I so raised my brows) the blessed image, which moved its wings urged by so many counsels. Wheeling it sang, and said, "As are my notes to thee who understandest them not, so is the eternal judgment to you mortals."

After those shining flames of the Holy Spirit became quiet, still in the sign which made the Romans reverend to the world, it began again, “To this kingdom no one ever ascended, who had not believed in Christ either before or after he was nailed to the tree. But behold, many cry Christ, Christ, who, at the Judgment, shall be far less near to him, than such an one who knew not Christ; and the Ethiop will condemn such Christians when the two companies shall be divided, the one forever rich, and the other poor. What will the Persians be able to say to your kings, when they shall see that volume open in which are written all their dispraises?[1] There among the deeds of Albert shall be seen that which will soon set the pen in motion, by which the kingdom of Prague shall be made desert.[2] There shall be seen the woe which he who shall die by the blow of a wild boar is bringing upon the Seine by falsifying the coin.[3] There shall be seen the pride that quickens thirst, which makes the Scot and the Englishman mad, so that neither can keep within his own bounds.[4] The luxury shall be seen, and the effeminate living of him of Spain, and of him of Bohemia, who never knew valor, nor wished it.[5] The goodness of the Cripple of Jerusalem shall be seen marked with a I, while an M shall mark the contrary.[6] The avarice and the cowardice shall be seen of him[7] who guards the island of the fire, where Anchises ended his long life; and, to give to understand how little worth he is, the writing for him shall be in contracted letters which shall note much in small space. And to every one shall be apparent the foul deeds of his uncle and of his brother[8] who have dishonored so famous a nation and two crowns. And he of Portugal,[9] and he of Norway[10] shall be known there; and he of Rascia,[11] who, to his harm, has seen the coin of Venice. O happy Hungary, if she allow herself no longer to be maltreated! and happy Navarre, if she would arm herself with the mountains which bind her round![12] And every one must believe that now, for earnest of this, Nicosia and Famagosta are lamenting and complaining because of their beast which departs not from the flank of the others.[13]

[1] The Persians, who know not Christ, will rebuke the sins of kings professedly Christians, when the book of life shall be opened at the last Judgment.

[2] The devastation of Bohemia in 1303, by Albert of Austria (the “German Albert” of the sixth canto of Purgatory), will soon set in motion the pen of the recording angel.

[3] After his terrible defeat at Courtray in 1302, Philip the Fair, to provide himself with means, debased. the coin of the realm. He died in 1314 from the effects of a fall from his horse, oven thrown by a wild boar in the forest of Fontainebleau.

[4] The wars of Edward I. and Edward II. with the Scotch under Wallace and Bruce were carried on with little intermission during the first twenty years of the fourteenth century.

[5] By “him of Spain,” Ferdinand IV. of Castile (1295-1312) seems to be intended; and by “him of Bohemia,” Wenceslaus IV., “whom luxury and idleness feed.” (Purgatory, Canto VII.).

[6] The virtues of the lame Charles II. of Apulia, titular king of Jerusalem, shall be marked with one, but his vices with a thousand.

[7] Frederick of Aragon, King of Sicily, too worthless to have his deeds written out in full. Dante's scorn of Frederick was enhanced by his desertion of the Ghibellines after the death of Henry VII.

[8] James, King of Majorca and Minorca, and James, King of Aragon.

[9] Denis, King of Portugal, 1279-1325.

[10] Perhaps Hakon Haleggr (Longlegs), 1299-1319.

[11] Rascia, so called from a Slavonic tribe, which occupied a region south of the Danube, embracing a part of the modern Servia and Bosnia. The kingdom was established in 1170. One of its kings, Stephen Ouros, who died in 1307, imitated the coin of Venice with a debased coinage.

[12] If she would make the Pyrenees her defence against France, into the hands of whose kings Navarre fell in 1304.

[13] The lot of these cities in Cyprus, which are now lamenting under the rule of Henry II. of the Lusignani, a beast who goes along with the rest, is a pledge in advance of what sort of fate falls to those who do not defend themselves.

CANTO XX.

The Song of the Just. — Princes who have loved righteousness, in the eye of the Eagle. — Spirits, once Pagans, in bliss. — Faith and Salvation. — Predestination.

When he who illumines all the world, descends from our hemisphere so that the day on every side is spent, the heavens which erst by him alone are enkindled, suddenly become again conspicuous with many lights, on which one is shining.[1] And this act of the heavens came to my mind when the ensign of the world and of its leaders became silent in its blessed beak; because all those living lights, far more shining, began songs which lapse and fall from out my memory.

[1] One, that is, the sun, supposed to be the source of the light of the stars.

O sweet love, that cloakest thee with a smile, how ardent didst thou appear in those pipes[1] which had the breath alone of holy thoughts!

[1] That is, in those singers.

After the precious and lucent stones, wherewith I saw the sixth luminary ingemmed, imposed silence on their angelic bells, I seemed to hear the murmur of a stream which falls pellucid down from rock to rock, showing the abundance of its mountain source. And as the sound takes its form at the cithern's neck, and in like manner at the vent of the bagpipe the air which enters it, thus, without pause of waiting, that murmur of the Eagle rose up through its neck, as if it were hollow. There it became voice, and thence it issued through its beak in form of words, such as the heart whereon I wrote them was awaiting.

"The part in me which in mortal eagles sees and endures the sun," it began to me, "must now be fixedly looked upon, because of the fires whereof I make my shape, those wherewith the eye in my head sparkles are the highest of all their grades. He who shineth in the middle, as the pupil, was the, singer of the Holy Spirit, who, bore about the ark from town to town.[1] Now he knows the merit of his song, so far as it was the effect of his own counsel,[2] by the recompense which is equal to it. Of the five which make a circle for the brow, be who is nearest to my beak consoled the poor widow for her son.[3] Now he knows, by the experience of this sweet life and of the opposite, how dear it costs not to follow Christ. And he who follows along the top of the are in the circumference of which I speak, by true penitence postponed death.[4] Now he knows that the eternal judgment is not altered, when worthy prayer there below makes to-morrow's what is of to-day. The next who follows,[5] under a good intention which bore bad fruit, by ceding to the Pastor[6] made himself Greek, together with

the laws and me. Now he knows how the ill derived from his good action is not hurtful to him, although thereby the world may be destroyed. And he whom thou seest in the down-bent are was William,[7] whom that land deplores which weeps for Charles and Frederick living.[8] Now he knows how heaven is enamoured of a just king, and even by the aspect of his effulgence makes it seen. Who, down in the erring world, would believe that Rhipeus the Trojan[9] was the fifth in this circle of the holy lights? Now he knows much of what the world cannot see of the divine grace, although his sight cannot discern its depth."

[1] David. See 2 Samuel, vi.

[2] So far as it proceeded from his own free will, open to the inspiration of grace.

[3] Trajan. See Purgatory, Canto X.

[4] King Hezekiah. See 2 Kings, xx.

[5] The Emperor Constantine.

[6] By his so-called "Donation," Constantine was believed to have ceded Rome to the Pope, and by transferring the seat of empire to Constantinople, he made the laws and the eagle Greek.

[7] William H., son of Robert Guiscard, King of Sicily and Apulia, called "the Good."

[8] Charles H. of Apulia, and Frederick of Aragon, King of Sicily.

[9] — Rhipeus,iustissimus unus Qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi. — Aeneid, ii, 426-7.

"Rhipeus, the one justest man, and heedfullest of right among the Trojans."

Like as a little lark that in the air expatiates first singing, and then is silent, content with the last sweetness which satisfies her, such seemed to me the image of the imprint of the Eternal Plea, sure, according to whose desire everything becomes that which it is.[1] And though I was there, in respect to my doubt,[2] like glass to the color which cloaks it; it[3] endured not to await the time in silence, but with the force of its own weight urged from my mouth, "What things are these?" whereat I saw great festival of sparkling. Thereupon, with its eye more enkindled, the blessed ensign answered me , in order not to keep me in wondering suspense: "I see that thou believest these things because I say them, but thou seest not how; so that, although believed in, they are hidden. Thou dost as one who fully apprehends a thing by name, but cannot see its quiddity unless another explain it. Regnum coelorum[4] suffers violence from fervent love, and from a living hope which vanquishes the divine will; not in such wise as man overcomes man, but vanquishes it, because it wills to be vanquished, and, vanquished, vanquishes with its own benignity. The first life of the eyebrow and the fifth make thee marvel, because thou seest the region of the Angels painted

with them. From their bodies they did not issue Gentiles, as thou believest, but Christians, in firm faith, one in the Feet that were to suffer, one in the Feet that had suffered.[5] For the one from Hell, where there is never return to righteous will, came back to his bones; and that was the reward of living hope; of living hope, which put its power in prayers made to God to raise him up, so that it might be possible his will should be moved.[6] The glorious soul, whereof I speak, returning to the flesh, in which it remained short while, believed in Him who was able to aid it; and in believing was kindled to such fire of true love, that at the second death it was worthy to come to this sport. The other, through grace which distils from a fount so deep that creature never pushed the eye far as its primal wave, there below set all his love on righteousness; wherefore from grace to grace God opened his eye to our future redemption, so that he believed in it, and thenceforth endured no more the stench of paganism, and reproved therefor the perverse folk. More than a thousand years before baptizing,[7] those three ladies whom thou sawest at the right wheel[8] were to him for baptism. O predestination, how remote is thy root from the sight of those who see not the entire First Cause! And ye, mortals, keep yourselves restrained in judging; for we who see God know not yet all the elect. And unto us such want is sweet, for our good is perfected in this good, that what God wills we also will."

[1] So, seemed the image (that is, the eagle), satiated with its bliss, whether in the speech or the silence imposed upon it by the Eternal Pleasure, in accordance with which all things fulfil their ends.

[2] How Trajan and Rhipeus could be in Paradise, since none but those who had believed in Christ were there.

[3] My doubt.

[4] The kingdom of Heaven." — Matthew, xi. 12.

[5] Rhipeus died before the coming of Christ; Trajan after.

[6] According to the legend, St. Gregory the Great prayed that Trajan, because of his great worth, might be restored to life long enough for his will to return to righteousness, and for him to profess his faith in Christ.

[7] Before the divine institution of the rite of baptism his faith, hope, and charity served him in lieu thereof.

[8] Of the Chariot of the Church. See Purgatory, Canto XXIX.

Thus, to make my short sight clear, sweet medicine was given to me by that divine image. And as a good lutanist makes the vibration of the string accompany a good singer, whereby the song acquires more pleasantness, so it comes back to my mind that, while it spake, I saw the two blessed lights moving their flamelets to the words, just as the winking of the eyes concords.

CANTO XXI.

Ascent to the Heaven of Saturn. — Spirits of those who had given themselves to devout contemplation. — The Golden Stairway. — St. Peter Damian. — Predestination. — The luxury of modern Prelates.

Now were my eyes fixed again upon the countenance of my Lady, and my mind with them, and from every other intent it was withdrawn; and she was not smiling, but, “If I should smile,” she began to me, “thou wouldst become such as Semele was when she became ashes; for my beauty, which along the stairs of the eternal palace is kindled the more, as thou hast seen, the higher it ascends, is so resplendent that, if it were not tempered, at its effulgence thy mortal power would be as a bough shattered by thunder. We are lifted to the seventh splendor which beneath the breast of the burning Lion now radiates downward mingled with his strength.[1] Fix thy mind behind thine eyes, and make of them mirrors for the shape which in this mirror shall be apparent to thee.”

[1] The seventh splendor is Saturn, which was in the sign of the Lion, whence its rays fell to earth, mingled with the strong influences of the sign.

He who should know what was the pasture of my sight in her blessed aspect, when I transferred me to another care, would recognize, by counterposing one side with the other, how pleasing it was to me to obey my celestial escort.

Within the crystal which, circling round the world, bears the name of its shining leader, under whom all wickedness lay dead,[1] I saw, of the color of gold through which a sunbeam is shining,[2] a stairway rising up so high that my eye followed it not. I saw, moreover, so many splendors descending, along the steps, that I thought every light which appears in heaven was there diffused.

[1] Saturn, in the golden age.

[2] As in a painted window.

And as, according to their natural custom, the rooks, at the beginning of the day, move about together, in order to warm their cold feathers; then some go away without return, others wheel round to whence they had set forth, and others, circling, make a stay; such fashion it seemed to me was here in that sparkling which came together, so soon as it struck on a certain step; and that which stopped nearest to us became so bright that I said in my thought, “I clearly see the love which thou signifiest to me. But she, from whom I await the how and the when of speech and of silence, stays still; wherefore I, contrary to desire, do well that I ask not.” Whereupon she, who saw my silence, in the sight of Him who sees everything, said to me, “Let loose thy warm desire.”

And I began, “My own merit makes me not worthy of thy answer; but for her sake who concedes to me the asking, O blessed life, that keepest thyself hidden within thine own joy, make known to me the cause which has placed thee so near me; and tell why in this wheel the sweet symphony of Paradise is silent, which below through the others so devoutly sounds.” “Thou hast thy hearing mortal, as thy sight,” it replied to me; “therefore no song is here for the same reason that Beatrice has no smile. Down along the steps of the holy stairway I have thus far descended, only to give thee glad welcome with my speech and with the light that mantles me; nor has more love made me to be more ready, for as much and more love is burning here above, even as the flaming manifests to thee; but the high charity, which makes us ready servants to the counsel that governs the world, allots here,[1] even as thou observest.” “I see well,” said I, “O sacred lamp, how the free will of love suffices in this Court for following the eternal Providence. But this is what seems to me hard to discern, why thou alone wert predestined to this office among thy consorts.” I had not come to the last word before the light made a centre of its middle, whirling like a swift milestone. Then the love that was within it answered, “A divine light strikes upon me, penetrating through this wherein I embosom me: the virtue of which, conjoined with my vision, lifts me above myself so far that I see the Supreme Essence from which it emanates. Thence comes the joy wherewith I flame, because to my vision, in proportion as it is clear, I match the clearness of my flame. But that soul in Heaven which is most enlightened,[2] that Seraph who has his eye most fixed on God, could not satisfy thy demand; because that which thou askest lies so deep within the abyss of the eternal statute, that from every created sight it is cut off. And when thou retumest to the mortal world, carry this back, so that it may no more presume to move its feet toward such a goal. The mind which shines here, on earth is smoky; wherefore consider how there below it can do that which it cannot do though Heaven assume it.”

[1] Assigns its part to each spirit.

[2] With the Divine light.

So did its words prescribe to me, that I left the question, and drew me back to ask it humbly who it was. “Between the two shores of Italy, and not very distant from thy native land, rise rocks so lofty that the thunders sound far lower down, and they make a height which is called Catria, beneath which a hermitage is consecrated which is wont to be devoted to worship only.”[1] Thus it began again to me with its third speech, and then, continuing, it said, “Here in the service of God I became so steadfast, that, with food of olive juice alone, lightly I used to pass the heats and frosts, content in contemplative thoughts. That cloister was

wont to render in abundance to these heavens; and now it is become so empty as needs must soon be revealed. In that place I was Peter Damian,[2] and Peter a sinner had I been in the house of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore.[3] Little of mortal life was remaining for me, when I was sought for and dragged to that hat[4] which ever is passed down from bad to worse. Cephas[5] came, and the great vessel of the Holy Spirit[6] came, lean and barefoot, taking the food of whatsoever inn. Now the modern pastors require one to hold them up on this side and that, and one to lead them, so heavy are they, and one to support them behind. They cover their palfreys with their mantles, so that two beasts go under one skin. O Patience, that endurest so much!" At this voice I saw more flamelets from step to step descending and revolving, and each revolution made them more beautiful. Round about this one they came, and stopped, and uttered a cry of such deep sound that here could be none like it, nor did I understand it, the thunder so overcame me.

[1] Catria is a high offshoot to the east from the chain of the Apennines, between Urbino and Gubbio. Far up on its side lies the monastery of Santa Croce di Fouts Avellana, belonging to the order of the Camaldulensians.

[2] A famous doctor of the Church in the eleventh century. He was for many years abbot of the Monastery of Fonte Avellana.

[3] These last words are obscure, and have given occasion to much discussion, after which they remain no clearer than before. The house of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore is supposed to be the monastery of Santa Maria in Porto, near Ravenna.

[4] He was made cardinal in 1058, and died in 1072.

[5] St. Peter. See John, i. 42.

[6] St. Paul. "He is a chosen vessel unto me." — Acts, ix. 15.

CANTO XXII.

Beatrice reassures Dante. — St. Benedict appears. — He tells of the founding of his Order, and of the falling away of its brethren. Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Starry Heaven. — The constellation of the Twins. — Sight of the Earth.

Oppressed with amazement, I turned me to my Guide, like a little child who runs back always thither where he most confides. And she, like a mother who quickly succors her pale and breathless son with her voice, which is wont to reassure him, said to me, 11 Knowest thou not, that thou art in Heaven? and knowest thou not that Heaven is all holy, and whatever is done here comes from good zeal? How the song would have transformed thee, and I by smiling, thou canst now conceive, since the cry has moved thee so much; in which, if thou hadst understood its prayers, already would be known to thee the vengeance which thou shalt see before thou diest. The sword of here on high cuts not in haste, nor slow, save to the seeming of him who, desiring, or fearing, awaits it. But turn thee round now toward the others, for many illustrious spirits thou shalt see, if, as I say, thou dost lead back thy look."

As it pleased her I directed my eyes, and saw a hundred little spheres, which together were becoming more beautiful with mutual rays. I was standing as one who within himself represses the point of his desire, and attempts not to ask, he so fears the too-much. And the largest and the most luculent of those pearls came forward to make of its own accord my wish content. Then within it I heard, "If thou couldst see, as I do, the charity which burns among us, thy thoughts would be expressed. But that thou through waiting mayst not delay thy high end, I will make answer to thee, even to the thought concerning which thou art so regardful.

"That mountain[1] on whose slope Cassino is, was of old frequented on its summit by the deluded and illdisposed people, and I am be who first carried up thither the name of Him who brought to earth the truth which so high exalts us: and such grace shone upon me that I drew away the surrounding villages from the impious worship which seduced the world. These other fires were all contemplative men, kindled by that heat which brings to birth holy flowers and fruits. Here is Macarius,[2] here is Romuald,[3] here are my brothers, who within the cloisters fixed their feet, and held a steadfast heart." And I to him, "The affection which thou displayest in speaking with me, and the good semblance which I see and note in all your ardors, have so expanded my confidence as the sun does the rose, when she becomes open so much as she has power to be. Therefore I pray thee, and do thou, father, assure me if I have power to receive so much grace,

that I may see thee with uncovered shape." Whereon he, "Brother, thy high desire shall be fulfilled in the last sphere, where are fulfilled all others and my own. There perfect, mature, and whole is every desire; in that alone is every part there where it always was: for it is not in space, and hath not poles; and our stairway reaches up to it, wherefore thus from thy sight it conceals itself. Far up as there the patriarch Jacob saw it stretch its topmost part when it appeared to him so laden with Angels. But now no one lifts his feet from earth to ascend it; and my Rule is remaining as waste of paper. The walls, which used to be an abbey, have become caves; and the cowls are sacks full of bad meal. But heavy usury is not gathered in so greatly against the pleasure of God, as that fruit which makes the heart of monks so foolish. For whatsoever the Church guards is all for the folk that ask it in God's name, not for one's kindred, or for another more vile. The flesh of mortals is so soft that a good beginning suffices not below from the springing of the oak to the forming of the acorn. Peter began without gold and without silver, and I with prayers and with fasting, and Francis in humility his convent; and if thou lookest at the source of each, and then lookest again whither it has run, thou wilt see dark made of the white. Truly, Jordan turned back, and the sea fleeing when God willed, were more marvellous to behold than succor here."[4]

[1] Monte Cassino, in the Kingdom of Naples, on which a temple of Apollo had stood, was chosen by St. Benedict (480-543) as his abode, and became the site of the most famous monastery of his Order.

[2] The Egyptian anchorite of the fourth century.

[3] The founder of the order of Camaldoli; he died in 1027.

[4] Were God now to interpose to correct the evils of the Church, the marvel would be less than that of the miracles of old, and therefore his interposition may be hoped for.

Thus he said to me, and then drew back to his company, and the company closed up; then like a whirlwind all gathered itself upward.

The sweet Lady urged me behind them, with only a sign, up over that stairway; so did her virtue overcome my nature. But never here below, where one mounts and descends naturally, was there motion so rapid that it could be compared unto my wing. So may I return, Reader, to that devout triumph, for the sake of which I often bewail my sins and beat my breast, thou hadst not so quickly drawn out and put thy finger in the fire as I saw the sign which follows the Bull,[1] and was within it.

[1] The sign of the Gemini, or Twins, in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars.

O glorious stars, O light impregnate with great virtue, from which I acknowledge all my genius, whatever it may be; with you was born and with you

was hiding himself he who is father of every mortal life, when I first felt the Tuscan air;[1] and then, when the grace was bestowed on me of entrance within the lofty wheel which turns you, your region was allotted to me. To you my soul now devoutly sighs to acquire virtue for the difficult pass which draws her to itself.

[1] At the time of Dante's birth the sun was in the sign of the Twins.

"Thou art so near the ultimate salvation," began Beatrice, "that thou oughtest to have thine eyes clear and sharp. And therefore ere thou further enterest it, look back downward, and see how great a world I have already set beneath thy feet, in order that thy heart, so far as it is able, may present itself joyous to the triumphant crowd which comes glad through this round aether." With my sight I returned through each and all the seven spheres, and saw this globe such that I smiled at its mean semblance; and that counsel I approve as best which holds it of least account; and he who thinks of other things may be called truly worthy. I saw the daughter of Latona enkindled without that shadow which had been the cause why I once believed her rare and dense. The aspect of thy son, Hyperion, here I endured, and I saw how Maia and Dione[1] move around and near him. Then appeared to me the temperateness of Jove, between his father and his son,[2] and then was clear to me the variation which they make in their places. And all the seven were displayed to me,[[how great they are and how swift they are, and how they are in distant houses. While I was revolving with the eternal Twins, the little threshing-floor[3] which makes us so fierce all appeared to me, from its hills to its harbors.

[1] The mothers of Venus and Mercury, by whose names these planets are designated.

[2] Saturn and Mars.

[3] The inhabited earth.

Then I turned back my eyes to the beautiful eyes.

CANTO XXIII.

The Triumph of Christ.

As the bird, among the beloved leaves, reposing on the nest of her sweet brood through the night which hides things from us, who, in order to see their longed-for looks and to find the food wherewith she may feed them, in which heavy toils are pleasing to her, anticipates the time upon the open twig, and with ardent affection awaits the sun, fixedly looking till the dawn may break; thus my Lady was standing erect and attentive, turned toward the region beneath which the sun shows least haste;[1] so that I, seeing her rapt and eager, became such as he who in desire should wish for something, and in hope is satisfied. But short while was there between one and the other WHEN: that of my awaiting, I mean, and of my seeing the heavens become brighter and brighter. And Beatrice said, “Behold the hosts of the triumph of Christ, and all the fruit harvested by the revolution of these spheres.”[2] It seemed to me her face was all aflame, and her eyes were so full of joy that I must needs pass it over without description.

[1] The meridian.

[2] By the beneficent influences of the planets.

As in the clear skies at the full moon Trivia[1] smiles among the eternal nymphs who paint the heaven through all its depths, I saw, above myriads of lights, a Sun that was enkindling each and all of them, as ours kindles the supernal shows;[2] and through its living light the lucent Substance[3] shone so bright upon my face that I sustained it not.

[1] An appellation of Diana, and hence of the moon.

[2] According to the belief, referred to at the opening of the twentieth Canto, that the sun was the source of the light of the stars.

[3] Christ in his glorified body.

O Beatrice, sweet guide and dear!

She said to me, “That which overcomes thee is a power from which naught defends itself. Here is the Wisdom and the Power that opened the roads between heaven and earth, for which there had already been such long desire.”

As fire from a cloud unlocks itself by dilating, so that it is not contained therein, and against its own nature falls down to earth, so my mind, becoming greater amid those feasts, issued from itself; and what it became cannot remember.

“Open thine eyes and look at what I am; thou hast seen things such that thou art become able to sustain my smile.” I was as one who awakes from a forgotten dream and endeavors in vain to bring it back again to memory, when I heard this invitation, worthy of such gratitude that it is never effaced from the book which records the past. If now all those tongues which Polyhymnia and her sisters made most fat with their sweetest milk should sound to aid me, one would not come to a thousandth of the truth in singing the holy smile and how it made the holy face resplendent. And thus in depicting Paradise the consecrated poem needs must make a leap, even as one who finds his way cut off. But whoso should consider the ponderous theme and the mortal shoulder which therewith is laden would not blame it if under this it tremble. It is no coasting voyage for a little barque, this which the intrepid prow goes cleaving, nor for a pilot who would spare himself.

“Why doth my face so enamour thee that thou turnest not to the fair garden which beneath the rays of Christ is blossoming? Here is the rose,[1] in which the Divine Word became flesh: here are the lilies[2] by whose odor the good way was taken.” Thus Beatrice, and I, who to her counsel was wholly prompt, again betook me unto the battle of the feeble brows.

[1] The Virgin.

[2] The Apostles and Saints. The image is derived from St. Paul (2 Corinthians, ii. 14): “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” In the Vulgate the words are, “odorem notitiae suae manifestat per nos.”

As my eyes, covered with a shadow, have ere now seen a meadow of flowers in a sunbeam which streamed bright through a rifted cloud, so saw I many throngs of splendors flashed-upon from above with burning rays, without seeing the source of the gleams. O benignant Power which so dost impress them, upwards didst thou exalt thyself to bestow space there for my eyes, which were powerless.[1]

[1] The eyes of Dante, powerless to endure the sight of the glorified body of Christ, when that is withdrawn on high, are able to look upon those whom the light of Christ illumines.

The name of the fair flower which I ever invoke both morning and evening, wholly constrained my mind to gaze upon the greater fire.[1] And when the form and the glory of the living star, which up. there surpasses as here below it surpassed, were depicted in both my eyes, through the mid heavens a torch, formed in a circle in fashion of a crown, descended, and engirt it, and revolved around it. Whatever melody sounds sweetest here below, and to itself most draws the soul, would seem a cloud which, rent apart, thunders, compared with the sound of that lyre wherewith was crowned the beauteous sapphire by which

the brightest Heaven is ensapphired. “I am angelic Love, and I circle round the lofty joy which breathes from the bosom which was the hostelry of our desire; and I shall circle, Lady of Heaven, while thou shalt follow thy Son and make the supreme sphere more divine because thou enterest it.” Thus the circling melody sealed itself up, and all the other lights made resound the name of Mary.

[1] The Virgin, — Rosa mistica, — the brightest of all the host that remained.

The royal mantle[1] of all the volumes[2] of the world, which is most fervid and most quickened in the breath of God and in His ways, had its inner shore so distant above us that sight of it, there where I was, did not yet appear to me. Therefore my eyes had not the power to follow the incoronate flame, which mounted upward following her own seed. And as a little child which, when it has taken the milk, stretches its arms toward its mother, through the spirit that flames up outwardly, each of these white splendors stretched upward with its summit, so that the deep aflection which they had for Mary was manifest to me. Then they remained there in ray sight, singing “Regina coeli “ so sweetly that never has the delight departed from me. Oh how great is the plenty that is heaped up in those most rich chests which were good laborers in sowing here below! Here they live and enjoy the treasure that was acquired while weeping in the exile of Babylon, where the gold was left aside.[3] Here triumphs, under the high Son of God and of Mary, in his victory, both with the ancient and with the new council, he who holds the keys of such glory.[4]

[l] The Primum Mobile, the ninth Heaven, which revolves around all the others.

[2] The revolving spheres.

[3] Despising the treasures of the world, in the Babylonish exile of this life, they laid up for themselves treasures in Heaven.

[4] St. Peter.

CANTO XXIV.

St. Peter examines Dante concerning Faith, and approves his answer.

"O company elect to the great supper of the blessed Lamb, who feeds you so that your desire is always full, since by grace of God this man foretastes of that which falls from your table, before death prescribes the time for him, give heed to his immense longing, and bedew him a little; ye drink ever of the fount whence comes that which he ponders." Thus Beatrice; and those glad souls made themselves spheres upon fixed poles, flaming brightly in manner of comets. And as wheels within the fittings of clocks revolve, so that to him who gives heed the first seems quiet, and the last to fly, so these carols,[1] differently dancing, swift and slow, enabled me to estimate their riches.

[1] A carol was a dance with song; here used for the souls who composed the carols, the difference in whose speed gave to Dante the gauge of their respective blessedness.

From that which I noted of greatest beauty, I saw issue a fire so happy that it left there none of greater brightness; and three times it revolved round Beatrice with a song so divine that my fancy repeats it not to me; therefore the pen makes a leap, and I write it not, for our imagination, much more our speech, is of too vivid color[1] for such folds. "O holy sister mine, who so devoutly prayest to us, by thy ardent affection thou unbindest me from that beautiful sphere:" after it had stopped, the blessed fire directed to my Lady its breath, which spoke thus as I have said. And she, "O light eternal of the great man to whom our Lord left the keys, which he bore below, of this marvellous joy, test this man on points light and grave, as pleases thee, concerning the Faith, through which thou didst walk upon the sea. If he loves rightly, and hopes rightly, and believes, it is hidden not from thee, for thou hast thy sight there where everything — @is seen depicted. But since this realm has made citizens by the true faith, it is well that to glorify it speech of it should fall to him."[2]

[1] The figure is a little obscure; pieghe, "folds," is a rhyme-word; the meaning seems to be that as folds cannot be painted properly with bright hues, so our imagination and our speech are not delicate enough for conceiving and depicting such exquisite delights.

[2] The meaning seems to be, — Thou knowest that he has true faith, but because by its means one becomes a citizen of this realm, it is well that he should celebrate it.

Even as, until the master propounds the question, the bachelor speaks not, and arms himself in order to adduce the proof, not to decide it, so, while she was speaking, I was arming me with every reason, in order to be ready for such a questioner, and for such a profession.

"Say thou, good Christian, declare thyself; Faith, — what is it?" Whereon I raised my brow to that light whence this was breathed out. Then I turned to Beatrice, and she made prompt signals to me that I should pour the water forth from my internal fount. "May the Grace," began I, "which grants to me that I confess myself to the high captain, cause my conceptions to be expressed."[1] And I went on, "As the veracious pen, Father, of thy dear brother (who with thee set Rome on the good track) wrote of it, Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and evidence of things not seen:[2] and this appears to me its essence." Then I heard, "Rightly dost thou think, if thou understandest well why he placed it among the substances, and then among the evidences." And I thereon: "The deep things which grant unto me here the sight of themselves, are so hidden to eyes below that there their existence is in belief alone, upon which the high hope is founded, and therefore it takes the designation of substance; and from this belief we needs must syllogize, without having other sight, wherefore it receives the designation of evidence."[3] Then I heard, "If whatever is acquired below for doctrine, were so understood, the wit of sophist would have no place there." Thus was breathed forth from that enkindled love; then it added, "Very well have the alloy and the weight of this coin been now run through, but tell me if thou hast it in thy purse?" And I, "Yes, I have it so shining and so round that in its stamp nothing is uncertain to me." Then issued from the deep light which was shining there, "This precious jewel, whereon every virtue is founded, whence came it to thee?" And I, "The abundant rain of the Heavenly Spirit, which is diffused over the Old and over the New parchments, is a syllogism[4] which has proved it to me so acutely that in comparison with it every demonstration seems to me obtuse." I heard then, "The Old and the New proposition[5] which are so conclusive to thee, — why dost thou hold them for divine speech?" And I, "The proofs which disclose the truth to me are the works[6] that followed, for which nature never heated iron, nor beat anvil." It was replied to me, "Say, what assures thee that these works were? The very thing itself which requires to be proved, naught else, affirms it to thee." "If the world were converted to Christianity," said I, "without miracles, this alone is such that the others are not the hundredth part; for thou didst enter poor and fasting into the field to sow the good plant, which once was a vine and now has become a thornbush."

[1] May it enable me to express clearly my conceptions.

[2] Hebrews, xi, 1.

[3] The argument is as follows: The things of the spiritual world having no visible existence upon earth, the hope of blessedness rests only on belief unsupported by material proof; this belief is Faith, and since on it alone are the high hopes founded, it is properly called their substance, that is, their essential quality. And since all our reasoning concerning spiritual things must be drawn not from visible things, but from the convictions of Faith, our faith is also properly called evidence.

[4] The evidence afforded by the Old and the New Testament that they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, makes their teachings in regard to matters of faith conclusive.

[5] The two premises of the syllogism.

[6] The miracles.

This ended, the high holy Court resounded through the spheres a “We praise God,” in the melody which thereabove is sung.

And that Baron who thus from branch to branch, examining, had now drawn me on, so that to the last leaves we were approaching, began again: “The Grace that dallies with thy mind has opened thy mouth up to this point as it should be opened, so that I approve that which has issued forth, but now there is need to express what thou believest, and wbence it has been offered to thy belief.” “O holy father, spirit who seest that which thou so believedst that thou, toward the sepulchre, didst outdo younger feet,”[1] began I, “thou wishest that I should declare here the form of my ready belief, and also thou inquirest the cause of it. And I answer: I believe in one God, sole and eternal, who, unmoved, moves all the Heavens with love and with desire; and for such belief have I not only proofs physical and metaphysical, but that truth also gives it to me which hence rains down through Moses, through Prophets, and through Psalms, through the Gospel, and through you who wrote after the fiery Spirit made you holy. And I believe in three Eternal Persons, and these I believe one essence, so one and so threefold that it will admit to be conjoined with ARE and IS. Of the profound divine condition on which I touch, the evangelic doctrine ofttimes sets the seal upon my mind. This is the beginning; this is the spark which afterwards dilates to vivid flame, and like a star in heaven scintillates within me.”

[1] “The other disciple did outrun Peter,” but Peter first “went into the sepulchre.” See John, xx. 4-6.

Even as a lord who hears what pleases him, thereon, rejoicing in the news, embraces his servant, soon as he is silent, thus, blessing me as he sang, the apostolic light, at whose command I had spoken, thrice encircled me when I was silent; so had I pleased him in my speech.

CANTO XXV.

St. James examines Dante concerning Hope. — St. John appears,with a brightness so dazzling as to deprive Dante, for the time, of sight.

If it ever happen that the sacred poem to which both heaven and earth have set their hand, so that it has made me lean for many years, sbould overcome the cruelty which bars me out of the fair sheep-fold, where a lamb I slept, an enemy to the wolves that give it war, then with other voice, with other fleece, Poet will I return, and on the font of my baptism will I take the crown; because there I entered into the faith which makes the souls known to God, and afterward. Peter, for its sake, thus encircled my brow.

Then a light moved toward us from that sphere whence the first-fruit which Christ left of His vicars had issued. And my Lady, full of gladness, said to me, "Look, look! behold the Baron for whose sake Galicia is visited there below."[1]

[1] It was believed that St. James, the brother of St. John, was buried at Compostella, in the Spanish province of Galicia. His shrine was one of the chief objects of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages.

Even as when the dove alights near his companion, and one, turning and cooing, displays its affection to the other, so by the one great Prince glorious I saw the other greeted, praising the food which feasts them thereabove. But after their gratulation was completed, silent coram me,[1] each stopped, so ignited that it overcame my sight. Smiling, then Beatrice said, "Illustrious life, by whom the largess of our basilica has been written,[2] do thou make Hope resound upon this height; thou knowest that thou dost represent it as many times as Jesus to the three displayed most brightness."[3] "Lift up thy head and make thyself assured; for that which comes up here from the mortal world needs must be ripened in our rays." This comfort from the second fire came to me; whereon I lifted up my eyes unto the mountains which bent them down before with too great weight.

[1] "Before me." Here, as sometimes elsewhere, it is not evident why Dante uses Latin words.

[2] The reference is to the Epistle of James, which Dante, falling into a common error, attributes to St. James the Greater. The special words be had in mind may have been: " God, that giveth to all men liberally," i. 5; and " Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," i. 17. By "basilica" is meant the court or church of heaven.

[3] Peter, James, and John, were chosen by their Master to be present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and to witness his Transfiguration. Peter personifying Faith, John personifying Love, it was natural to take James as the personification of Hope.

"Since, through grace, our Emperor wills that thou, before thy death, come face to face with his Counts in the most secret hall, so that, having seen the truth of this Court, thou mayest therewith confirm in thyself and others the Hope which there below rightly enamours, say what it is, and how thy mind is

flowering with it, and say whence it came to thee;" thus further did the second light proceed. And that compassionate one, who guided the feathers of my wings to such high flight, thus in the reply anticipated me.[1] "The Church militant has not any son with more hope, as is written in the Sun which irradiates all our band; therefore it is conceded to him, that from Egypt be should come to Jerusalem to see, ere the warfare be at end for him. The other two points which are asked not for sake of knowing, but that he may report how greatly this virtue is pleasing to thee, to him I leave, for they will not be difficult to him, nor of vainglory, and let him answer to this, and may the grace of God accord this to him."

[1] Beatrice answers the question to which the reply, had it been left to Dante, might seem to involve self-praise.

As a disciple who follows his teacher, prompt and willing, in that wherein he is expert, so that his worth may be disclosed: "Hope," said I, "is a sure expectation of future glory, which divine grace produces, and preceding merit.[1] From many stars this light comes to me, but be instilled it first into my heart who was the supreme singer[2] of the supreme Leader. Sperent in te,[3] 'who know thy name,' he says in his Theody,[4] and who knows it not, if he has my faith? Thou afterwards didst instil it into me with his instillation in thy Epistle, so that I am full, and upon others shower down again your rain."

[1] These words are taken directly from Peter Lombard (Liber Sententiarum, iii. 26). Love is the merit which precedes Hope.

[2] David.

[3] "They will hope in thee." See Psalm ix. 10.

[4] Divine song.

While I was speaking, within the living bosom of that burning a flash was trembling, sudden and intense, in the manner of lightning. Then it breathed, "The love wherewith I still glow toward the virtue which followed me far as the palm, and to the issue of the field, wills that breathe anew to thee, that thou delight in it; and it is my pleasure, that thou tell that which Hope promises to thee." And I, "The new and the old Scriptures set up the sign, and it points this out to me. Of the souls whom God hath made his friends, Isaiah says that each shall be clothed in his own land with a double garment,[1] and his own land is this sweet life. And thy brother, far more explicitly, there where he treats of the white robes, makes manifest to us this revelation."[2]

[1] "Therefore in their land they shall possess the double" — (Isaiah, 1xi. 7); the double vesture of the glorified natural body and of the spiritual body.

[2] Revelation, vii.

And first, close on the end of these words, “Sperent in te” was heard from above us, to which all the carols made answer. Then among them a light became so bright that, if the Crab had one such crystal, winter would have a month of one sole day.[1] And as a glad maiden rises and goes and enters in the dance, only to do honor to the new bride, and not for any fault,[2] so saw I the brightened splendor come to the two who were turning in a wheel, such as was befitting to their ardent love. It set itself there into the song and into the measure, and my Lady kept her gaze upon them, even as a bride, silent and motionless. “This is he who lay upon the breast of our Pelican,[3] and from upon the cross this one was chosen to the great office.”[4] Thus my Lady, nor yet moved she her look from its fixed attention after than before these words of hers. As is he who gazes and endeavors to see the sun eclipsed a little, who through seeing becomes sightless, so did I become in respect to that last fire, till it was said, “Why dost thou dazzle thyself in order to see a thing which has no place here?[5] On earth my body is earth; and it will be there with the others until our number corresponds with the eternal purpose.[6] With their two garments in the blessed cloister are those two lights alone which ascended:[7] and this thou shalt carry back unto your world.”

[1] If Cancer, which rises at sunset in early winter, had a star as bright as this, the night would be light as day.

[2] Not for vanity, or love of, display.

[3] A common type of Christ during the Middle Ages, because of the popular belief that the pelican killed its brood, and then revived them with its blood.

[4] “Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!” — John, xix. 27.

[5] Dante seeks to see whether St. John is present in body as well as soul; his curiosity having its source in the words of the Gospel: “Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? . . . Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die.” — John, xxi. 22, 23.

[6] Till the predestined number of the elect is complete.

[7] Jesus and Mary, who had been seen to ascend. See Canto XXIII.

At this word the flaming gyre became quiet, together with the sweet mingling that was made of the sound of the trinal breath, even as, at ceasing of fatigue or danger, the oars, erst driven through the water, all stop at the sound of a whistle. Ah! how greatly was I disturbed in mind, when I turned to see Beatrice, at not being able to see her, although I was near her, and in the happy world.

CANTO XXVI.

St. John examines Dante concerning Love. — Dante's sight restored. — Adam appears, and answers questions put to him by Dante.

While I was apprehensive because of my quenched sight, a breath which made me attentive issued from the effulgent flame that quenched it, saying, "While thou art regaining the sense of sight which thou hast consumed on me, it is well that thou make up for it by discourse. Begin then, and tell whereto thy soul is aimed, and make thy reckoning that sight is in thee bewildered and not dead; because the Lady who conducts thee through this divine region has in her look the virtue which the band of Ananias had."[1] I said, "According to her pleasure, or soon or late, let the cure come to the eyes which were gates when she entered with the fire wherewith I ever burn! The Good which makes this court content is Alpha and Omega of whatsoever writing Love reads to me, either low or loud." That same voice which had taken from me fear of the sudden dazzling, laid on me the charge to speak further, and said, "Surely with a finer sieve it behoves thee to clarify; it behoves thee to tell who directed thy bow to such a target." And I, "By philosophic arguments and by authority that hence descends, such love must needs be impressed on me; for the good, so far as it is good, in proportion as it is understood, kindles love; and so much the greater as the more of goodness it includes within itself. Therefore, to the Essence (wherein is such supremacy that every good which is found outside of It is naught else than a beam of Its own radiance), more than to any other, the mind of every one who discerns the truth on which this argument is founded must needs be moved in love.[2] Such truth to my intelligence he makes plain, who demonstrates to me the first love of all the sempiternal substances.[3] The voice of the true Author makes it plain who, speaking of Himself, says to Moses, 'I will make thee see all goodness.'[4] Thou, too, makest it plain to me, beginning the lofty proclamation which there below, above all other trump, declares the secret of this place on high."[5] And I heard, "By human understanding, and by authorities concordant with it, thy sovran love looks unto God; but say, further, if thou feelest other cords draw thee towards Him, so that thou mayest declare with how many teeth this love bites thee."

[1] Acts ix.

[2] The argument is, — Whatever is good kindles love for itself; the greater the good the greater the love; God is the supreme good and therefore the chief object of love.

[3] It is doubtful to whom Dante here refers. The first love of immortal creatures is for their own First Cause.

[4] "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." — Exodus, xxxiii, 19.

[5] "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." — 1 John, iv. 16.

The holy intention of the Eagle of Christ was not latent to me; nay, rather I perceived whither he wished to lead my profession; therefore, I began again: "All those bitings which can make the heart turn to God have been concurrent unto my charity;[1] for the existence of the world, and my own existence, the death that He endured that I may live, and that which all the faithful hope even as I do, together with the aforesaid living knowledge, have drawn me from the sea of perverted love, and have set me on the shore of the right. The leaves, wherewith all the garden of the Eternal Gardener is enleaved, I love in proportion as good is borne unto them from Him."

[1] Have concurred to inspire me with love of God.

Soon as I was silent a most sweet song resounded through the heavens, and my Lady said with the rest, "Holy, Holy, Holy."

And as at a keen light sleep is broken by the spirit of sight, which runs to the splendor that goes from coat to coat,[1] and he who awakes shrinks from what he sees, so confused is his sudden wakening, until his judgment comes to his aid; thus Beatrice chased away every mote from my eyes with the radiance of her own, which were resplendent more than a thousand miles; so that I then saw better than before; and, as it were amazed, I asked about a fourth light which I saw with us. And my Lady, "Within those rays the first soul which the First Power ever created gazes with joy upon its creator."

[1] The spirit of the sight runs to meet the light which flashes through the successive coats of the eye.

As the bough that bends its top at passing of the wind, and then lifts itself by its own virtue which raises it, so did I, in amazement, the while she was speaking; and then a desire to speak, wherewith I was burning, gave me again assurance, and I began, "O Apple, that alone wast produced mature, O ancient Father, to whom every bride is daughter and daughter-in-law, devoutly as I can, I supplicate thee that thou speak to me; thou seest my wish, and in order to hear thee quickly, I do not tell it."

Sometimes an animal, which is covered up, so stirs, that his desire must needs become apparent through the corresponding movement which that which wraps him makes; and in like manner the first soul made evident to me, through its covering, how gladly it came to do me pleasure. Then it breathed, "Without its being uttered to me by thee, I better discern thy wish, than thou whatever thing is most certain to thee; because I see it in the truthful mirror which makes of Itself a likeness of other tbings, while nothing makes for It a likeness of Itself.[1] Thou

wouldst hear how long it is since God placed me in the lofty garden where this Lady disposed thee for so long a stairway; and how long it was a delight to my eyes; and the proper cause of the great wrath; and the idiom which I used and which I made. Now, my son, the tasting of the tree was not by itself the cause of so long an exile, but only the overpassing of the bound. There whence thy Lady moved Virgil, I longed for this assembly during four thousand three hundred and two revolutions of the sun; and while I was on earth I saw him return to all the lights of his path nine hundred and thirty times. The tongue which I spoke was all extinct long before the people of Nimrod attempted their unaccomplishable work; for never was any product of the reason (because of human liking, which alters, following the heavens) durable for ever.[2] A natural action it is for man to speak; but, thus or thus, nature then leaves for you to do according as it pleases you. Before I descended to the infernal anguish, the Supreme Good, whence comes the gladness that swathes me, was on earth called I; EL it was called afterwards;[3] and that must needs be,[4] for the custom of mortals is as a leaf on a branch, which goes away and another comes. On the mountain which rises highest from the wave I was, with pure life and sinful, from the first hour to that which, when the sun changes quadrant, follows the sixth hour."[5]

[1] All things are seen in God as if reflected in a mirror; but nothing can reflect an image of God. "In the eternal Idea, as in a glass, the works of God are more perfectly seen than in themselves. . . . But it is impossible for a thing created to represent that which is increated." — John Norton, The Orthodox Evangelist, 1554, p. 332.

[2] Speech, a product of human reason, changes according to the pleasure of main, which alters from time to time under the influence of the heavens.

[3] God was known in the primitive language by the sacred and mystical symbol I or J, the Hebrew letter Jod; afterwards by the term El: the first answering to Jehovah, the second to Elohim.

[4] Such change in the name was inevitable, because of the changing customs of thought and speech.

[5] Adam's stay in the Earthly Paradise on the summit of the mount of Purgatory was thus a little more than six hours; the sun changes quadrant with every six hours.

CANTO XXVII.

Denunciation by St. Peter of his degenerate successors. — Dante gazes upon the Earth. — Ascent of Beatrice and Dante to the Crystalline Heaven. — Its nature. — Beatrice rebukes the covetousness of mortals.

"To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit be glory," all Paradise began, so that the sweet song was inebriating me. That which I was seeing seemed to me a smile of the Universe; for my inebriation was entering through the hearing and through the sight. O joy! O ineffable gladness! O life entire of love and of peace! O riches secure, without longing![1]

[1] Which leave nothing for desire.

Before my eyes the four torches were standing enkindled, and that which had come first began to make itself more vivid, and in its semblance be came such as Jove would become, if be and Mars were birds, and should interchange feathers.[1] The Providence which here apportions turn and office, had imposed silence on the blessed choir on every side, when I heard, "If I change color, marvel not; for, while I speak, thou shalt see all these change color. He who on earth usurps my place, my place, my place, which is vacant in the presence of the Son of God, has made of my burial-place a sewer of blood and of stench, wherewith the Perverse One who fell from here above, below there is placated."

[1] The pure white light becoming red.

With that color which, by reason of the opposite sun, paints the cloud at evening and at morning, I then saw the whole Heaven overspread. And like a modest lady who abides sure of herself, and at the fault of another, in bearing of it only, becomes timid, even thus did Beatrice change countenance; and such eclipse I believe there was in heaven when the Supreme Power suffered.

Then his words proceeded, in a voice so transmuted from itself that his countenance was not more changed; "The Bride of Christ was not nurtured on my blood, on that of Linus and of Cletus, to be employed for acquist of gold; but for acquist of this glad life Sixtus and Pius and Calixtus and Urban[1] shed their blood after much weeping. It was not our intention that part of the Christian people should sit on the right hand of our successors, and part on the other; nor that the keys which were conceded to me should become a sign upon a banner which should fight against those who are baptized;[2] nor that I should be a figure on a seal to venal and mendacious privileges, whereat I often redden and flash. In garb of shepherd, rapacious wolves are seen from here-above over all the

pastures: O defence of God, why dost thou yet lie still! To drink our blood Cahorsines and Gascons are making ready:[3] O good beginning, to what vile end behoves it that thou fall! But the high Providence which with Scipio defended for Rome the glory of the world, will succor speedily, as I conceive. And thou, son, who because of thy mortal weight wilt again return below, open thy mouth, and conceal not that which I conceal not."

[1] Early Popes martyred for the faith.

[2] A reference to the war which Boniface VIII. waged against the Colonnesi. See Inferno, Canto XXVII.

[3] John XXII., who came to the Papacy in 1316, was a native of Cahors; his immediate predecessor, Clement V., 1305-1314, was a Gascon. The passage is one of those which shows that this portion of the poem was in hand during the last years of Dante's life.

[4] In midwinter, when the sun is in Capricorn.

Even as our air snows down flakes of frozen vapors, when the horn of the Goat of heaven touches the sun,[1] so, upward, I saw the aether become adorned, and flaked with the triumphant vapors[2] that had made sojourn there with us. My sight was following their semblances, and followed, till the intermediate space by its greatness pre. vented it from passing further onward. Whereon my Lady, who saw me disengaged from upward heeding, said to me, "Cast down thy sight, and look how thou hast revolved."

[1] The spirits.

Since the hour when I had first looked, I saw that I had moved through the whole are which the first climate makes from its middle to its end;[1] so that I saw beyond Cadiz the mad track of Ulysses, and near on this side the shore[2] on which Europa became a sweet burden. And more of the site of this little threshing-floor would have been discovered to me, but the sun was proceeding beneath my feet, a sign and more removed.[3]

[1] From Dante's first look downward from the Heavens, at the end of Canto XXII, to the present moment, he had moved over the arc which the first climate describes from its middle to its end. The old geographers divided the earth into seven zones, called climates, by circles parallel to the equator. The first climate extended twenty degrees to the north of the equator. The sign of the Gemini, in which Dante was revolving in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars, is in the zone of the Heavens corresponding to the first climate. As each climate extended on the habitable hemisphere for one hundred and eighty degrees, the arc from its middle to its end would be of ninety degrees, comprised between Jerusalem and Cadiz, and the time required for passing through it would be six hours, one fourth of the diurnal revolution of the Heavens.

[2] The shore of Phoenicia, whence Europa was carried off by Jupiter.

[3] The Sun in Aries was separated by Taurus from Gemini; hence not all of the hemisphere of the earth seen from Gemini was illuminated by the sun, which was some three hours in advance.

My enamoured mind, that ever dallies with my Lady, was more than ever burning to bring back my eyes to her. And if nature has made bait in human flesh, or art in its paintings, to catch the eyes in order to possess the mind, all united would seem naught compared to the divine pleasure which shone upon

me when I turned me to her smiling face. And the virtue with which the look indulged me, tore me from the fair nest of Leda,[1] and impelled me to the swiftest heaven.[2]

[1] From Gemini, the constellation of Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Leda.

[2] The Primum Mobile, or Crystalline Heaven.

Its parts, most living and lofty, are so uniform that I cannot tell which of them Beatrice chose for a place for me. But she, who saw my desire, began, smiling so glad that God seemed to rejoice in her countenance, "The nature of the world[1] which quiets the centre, and moves all the rest around it, begins here as from its, starting-point. And this heaven has no other Where than the Divine Mind, in which the love that revolves it is kindled, and the virtue which it rains down. Light and love enclose it with one circle, even as this does the others, and of that cincture He who girds it is the sole Intelligence.[2] The motion of this heaven is not marked out by another, but the others are measured by this, even as ten by a half and by a fifth.[3] And how time can hold its roots in such a flower-pot, and in the others its leaves, may now be manifest to thee.

[1] The world of the revolving Heavens.

[2] The Angelic Intelligences move the lower Heavens, but of the Empyrean God himself is the immediate governor.

[3] The reversal of magnitudes makes this image obscure. The motion of the Crystalline Heaven, the swiftest of all, determines the slower motions of the Heavens below it, and divides them; as five and two divide ten. The fixed unit of time is the day which is established by the revolution of the Primum Mobile.

"O covetousness,[1] which whelms mortals beneath thee, so that no one has power to withdraw his eyes from out thy waves! Well. blossoms the will in men, but the continual rain converts the true plums into wildings. Faith and innocence are found only in children; then both fly away ere yet the cheeks are covered. One, so long as he stammers, fasts, who afterward, when his tongue is loosed, devours whatever food under whatever moon; and one, while stammering, loves his mother and listens to her, who, when speech is perfect, desires then to see her buried. So the skin of the fair daughter of him who brings morning and leaves evening, white in its first aspect, becomes black.[2] Do thou, in order that thou make not marvel, reflect that on earth there is no one who governs; wherefore the human family is gone astray. But ere January be all un-wintered by that hundredth part which is down there neglected,[3] these supernal circles shall so roar that the storm which is so long awaited shall turn the sterns round to where the prows are, so that the fleet shall run straight, and true fruit shall come after the flower."

[1] The connection of the ideas presented in what precedes with this denunciation of covetousness, or selfishness, is not at first apparent. But the transition is not unnatural, from the consideration of the Heaven which pours down Divine influence, to the thought of the

engrossment of men in the pursuit of their selfish and transitory ends, in which they are blinded to heavenly and eternal good.

[2] Both the order of the words and the meaning of this sentence axe obscure.

[3] Before January falls in spring, owing to the lack of correctness in the calendar, by which the year is lengthened by about a day in each century. It is as if the poet said, — Before a thousand years shall pass; meaning, — Within short while.

CANTO XXVIII.

The Heavenly Hierarchy.

After she who imparadises my mind had disclosed the truth counter to the present life of wretched mortals, as he, who is lighted by a candle from behind, sees its flame in a mirror before he has it in sight or in thought, and turns round to see if the glass tell him the truth, and sees that it accords with it as the note with its measure;[1] I thus my memory recollects that I did, looking into the beautiful eyes, wherewith Love made the cord to ensnare me.[2] And when I turned, and mine were touched by that which is apparent in that revolving sphere whenever one gazes fixedly on its gyration, I saw a Point which was raying out light so keen that the sight on which it blazes must needs close because of its intense keenness. And whatso star seems smallest here would seem a moon if placed beside it, as star with star is placed. Perhaps as near as a halo seems to girdle the light which paints it, when the vapor that bears it is most dense, at such distance round the Point a circle of fire was whirling so swiftly that it would have surpassed that motion which with most speed girds the world; and this was by another circumcinct, and that by the third, and the third then by the fourth, by the fifth the fourth, and then by the sixth the fifth. Thereon the seventh followed, so spread now in compass that the messenger of Juno entire[3] would be narrow to contain it. So the eighth and the ninth; and each was moving more slowly, according as it was in number more distant from the first.[4] And that one had the clearest flame from which the Pure Spark was least distant; I believe because it partakes more of It. My Lady, who saw me deeply suspense in doubt, said, “On that Point Heaven and all nature are dependent. Gaze on that circle which is most conjoined to It, and know that its motion is so swift because of the burning love whereby it is spurred.” And I to her, “If the world were set in the order which I see in those wheels, that which is propounded to me would have satisfied me; but in the world of sense the revolutions may be seen so much the more divine as they are more remote from the centre.[5] Wherefore if my desire is to have end in this marvellous and angelic temple, which has for confine only love and light, I need yet to hear why the example and the exemplar go not in one fashion, because I by myself contemplate this in vain.” “If thy fingers are insufficient for such a knot, it is no wonder, so hard has it become through not being tried.” Thus my Lady; then she said, “Take that which I shall tell thee, if thou wouldest be satisfied, and make subtle thy wit about it. The corporeal circles[6] are wide and narrow according to the more or less of virtue which is

spread through all their parts. Greater goodness must make greater welfare; the greater body, if it has its parts equally complete, contains greater welfare. Hence this one,[7] which sweeps along with itself all the rest of the universe, corresponds to the circle[8] which loves most, and knows most. Therefore, if thou compassest thy measure round the virtue, not round the seeming of the substances which appear circular to thee, thou wilt see in each heaven a marvellous agreement with its Intelligence, of greater to more and of smaller to less."[9]

[1] As the note of the song with the measure of the verse.

[2] The eyes of Beatrice reflected, as a mirror, the light which shone from God.

[3] The full circle of Iris, or the rainbow.

[4] These circles of fire are the nine orders of Angels.

[5] The planetary spheres partake more of the divine nature, and move more swiftly, in proportion to their distance from the earth, their centre.

[6] The planetary spheres.

[7] The ninth sphere.

[8] Of the angelic hierarchy.

[9] The greater heaven corresponds to the angelic circle of the Intelligences which love God most and know most of Him; the smaller to that of those which love and know least.

As the hemisphere of the air remains splendid and serene when Boreas blows from that cheek wherewith he is mildest,[1] whereby the mist which first troubled it is cleared and dissolved, so that the heaven smiles to us with the beauties of all its flock, so I became after my Lady had provided me with her clear answer, and, like a star in heaven, the truth was seen.

[1] When Boreas blows the north wind more from the west than from the east.

And after her words had stopped, not otherwise does molten iron throw out sparks than the circles sparkled. Every scintillation followed its flame,[1] and they were so many that their number, was of more thousands than the doubling of the chess. I heard Hosaimah sung from choir to choir to the fixed Point that holds them, and will forever hold them, at the Ubi[2] in which they have ever been. And she, who saw the dubious thoughts within my mind, said, "The first circles have shown to thee the Seraphim and the Cherubim. Thus swiftly they follow their own bonds,[3] in order to liken themselves to the Point so far as they can, and they can so far as they are exalted to see. Those other loves, which go round about them, are called Thrones of the divine aspect, because they terminated the first triad.[4] And thou shouldst know that all have delight in proportion as their vision penetrates into the True in which every understanding is at rest. Hence may be

seen how beatitude is founded on the act which sees, not on that which loves, which follows after. And merit, which grace and good will bring forth, is the measure of this seeing; thus is the progress from grade to grade.

[1] The innumerable sparks each moved in accord with the gyration of its flaming circle. The doubling of the chess alludes to the story that the inventor of the game asked, as his reward from the King of Persia, a grain of wheat for the first square of the board, two for the second, and so on to the last or sixty-fourth square. The number reached by this process of duplication extends to twenty figures.

[2] The WHERE, the appointed place.

[3] The course of their respective circles to which they are bound.

[4] "Throni elevantur ad hoc quod Deum familiariter in seipsis recipiant." — Summa Theol., I, cviii. 6.

"The next triad that thus buds in this sempiternal spring which the nightly Aries despoils not,[1] perpetually sing their spring song of Hosannah with three melodies, which sound in the three orders of joy wherewith it is threefold. In this hierarchy are the three Divinities, first Dominations, and then the Virtues; the third order is of Powers. Then, in the two penultimate dances, the Principalities and Archangels circle; the last is wholly of Angelic sports. These orders are all upward gazing, and downward prevail, so that toward God they all are drawn, and they all draw. And Dionysius[2] with such great desire set himself to contemplate these orders, that he named and divided them, as I. But Gregory[3] afterward separated from him; wherefore, so soon as he opened his eyes in this Heaven, he smiled at himself. And if a mortal proffered on earth so much of secret truth, I would not have thee wonder, for he who saw it hereabove[4] disclosed it to him, with much else of the truth of these circles."

[1] At the autumnal equinox, the time of frosts, Aries is the sign in which the night rises.

[2] The Areopagite. See Canto X.

[3] The Pope, St. Gregory, who differs slightly from Dionysius in his arrangement of the Heavenly host.

[4] St. Paul, supposed to have communicated to his disciple the knowledge which he gained when caught up to Heaven. See 2 Cor., xii. 2.

CANTO XXIX.

Discourse of Beatrice concerning the creation and nature of the Angels. — She reproves the presumption and foolishness of preachers.

When both the children of Latona, covered by the Ram and by the Scales, together make a zone of the horizon,[1] as long as from the moment the zenith holds them in balance, till one and the other, changing their hemisphere, are unbalanced from that girdle, soloing, with her countenance painted with a smile, was Beatrice silent, looking fixedly upon the Point which had overcome me. Then she began: "I speak, and I ask not what thou wishest to hear, for I have seen it where every WHERE and every WHEN are centred. Not for the gain of good unto Himself, which cannot be, but that His splendor might, in resplendence, say, Subsisto; in His own eternity, outside of time, outside of every other limit, as pleased Him, the Eternal Love disclosed Himself in new loves. Nor before, as if inert, did He lie; for the going forth of God upon these waters had proceeded neither before nor after.[2] Form and matter, conjoined and simple, came forth to existence which had no defect, as three arrows from a three-stringed bow; and as in glass, in amber, or in crystal a ray shines so that there is no interval between its coining and its complete existence, so the triform effect[3] rayed forth from its Lord into its. existence all at once, without discrimination of beginning. Order was concreate, and established for the substances, and those were top of the world in which pure act was produced.[4] Pure potency held the lowest part;[5] in the middle such a bond unites potency with act, that it is never unbound.[6] Jerome has written to you of the Angels, created a long tract of centuries before the rest of the world was made. But this truth[7] is written on many pages by the writers of the that Holy Spirit: and thou wilt thyself discover it, if thou watchest well for it; and even the reason sees it somewhat, for it would not admit that the motors could be so long without their perfection.[8] Now thou knowest where and when these loves were elected, and how; so that three flames of thy desire are already quenched.

[1] When at the spring equinox, the sun being in the sign of Aries or the Ram, and the moon in that of Libra or the Scales, opposite to each other on the horizon, the one just rising and the other setting, they seem as if held for a moment in a balance which hangs from the zenith.

[2] In eternity there is no before or after; time had no existence till the creation, and has relevancy only to created things.

[3] Pure form, pure matter, and form conjoined with matter.

[4] The substances created purely active, to exercise action upon others, were the angels.

[5] The substances purely passive, capable potentially only of submitting to the action of others, are the material things without intelligence.

[6] The substances in which potency and act are united are the creatures endowed with bodies and souls.

[7] The truth here set forth (contrary to Jerome's assertion), the creation of the Angels was contemporaneous with that of the creation of the rest of the Universe of which they were the Intelligences.

[8] Without scope for their action as movers of the spheres.

One would not reach to twenty, in counting, so quickly as a part of the Angels disturbed the subject of your elements.[1] The rest remained and began this art which thou beboldest, with such great delight that they never cease from circling. The origin of the fall was the accursed pride of him whom thou hast seen oppress by all the weights of the world. Those whom thou seest here were modest in grateful recognition of the goodness which had made them ready for intelligence so great; wherefore their vision was exalted with illuminant grace and with their merit, so that they have full and steadfast will. And I wish that thou doubt not, but be certain, that to receive grace is meritorious in proportion as the affection is open to it.

[1] The earth.

"Henceforth, if my words have been harvested, thou canst contemplate sufficiently round about this consistory without other assistance. But because on earth it is taught in your schools that the angelic nature is such that it understands, and remembers, and wills, I will speak further, in order that thou mayest see the truth pure, which there below is mixed, through the equivocation in such like teaching. These substances, from the time that they were glad in the face of God, have not turned their sight from it, from which nothing is concealed. Therefore they have not their vision interrupted by a new object, and therefore do not need because of divided thought to recollect.[1] So that there below men dream when not asleep, believing and not believing to speak truth; but in the one is more fault and more shame.[2] Ye below go not along one path in philosophizing; so much do the love of appearance[3] and the thought of it transport you; and yet this is endured hereabove with less indignation than when the divine Scripture is set aside, or when it is perverted. Men think not there how much blood it costs to sow it in the world, and how much he pleases who humbly keeps close to its side. Every one strives for appearance, and makes his own inventions, and those are discoursed of by the preachers, and the Gospel is silent. One says that the moon turned back at the passion of Christ and interposed herself, so that the light of the sun reached not down; and others that the light hid itself of its own accord, so that this eclipse answered for the Spaniards and for the Indians as well as for the Jews. Florence hath not so many

Lapi and Bindi[4] as there are fables such as these shouted the year long from the pulpits, on every side; so that the poor flocks, who have no knowledge, return from the pasture fed with wind; and not seeing the harm does not excuse them. Christ did not say to his first company, 'Go, and preach idle stories to the world,' but he gave to them the true foundation; and that alone sounded in their cheeks, so that in the battle for kindling of the faith they made shield and lance of the Gospel. Now men go forth to preach with jests and with buffooneries, and provided only there is a good laugh the cowl puffs up, and nothing more is required. But such a bird is nesting in the tail of the hood, that if the crowd should see it, they would see the pardon in which they confide; through which such great folly has grown on earth, that, without proof of any testimony, men would flock to every indulgence. On this the pig of St. Antony fattens, and others also, who are far more pigs, paying with money that has no stamp of coinage.

[1] The angels, looking always upon God, to whom all things are present, have no need of memory.

[2] Many of the doctrines of men on earth axe like dreams, because they have no foundation in truth; and while some honestly believe in them, there are others, who, though not believing, still teach these doctrines as truth.

[3] Of making a good show.

[4] Common nicknames in Florence; Lapo is from Jacopo, Bindo from Ildebrando.

"But because we have digressed enough, turn back thine eyes now toward the straight path, so that the way be shortened with the time. This nature[1] so extends in number, that never was there speech or mortal concept that could go so far. And if thou considerest that which is revealed by Daniel thou wilt see that in his thousands[2] a determinate number is concealed. The primal light that irradiates it all is received in it by as many modes as are the splendors with which the light pairs itself.[3] Wherefore, since the affection follows upon the act[4] that conceives, in this nature the sweetness of love diversely glows and warms. Behold now the height and the breadth of the Eternal Goodness, since it has made for itself so many mirrors on which it is broken, One in itself remaining as before."

[1] The Angels.

[2] "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." — Daniel, vii. 10.

[3] No two angels are precisely alike in their vision of God.

[4] Since love follows on knowledge through vision.

CANTO XXX.

Ascent to the Empyrean. — The River of Light. — The celestial Rose. — The seat of Henry VII. — The last words of Beatrice.

The sixth hour is glowing perhaps six thousand miles distant from us, and this world now inclines its shadow almost to a level bed, when the mid heaven, deep above us, begins to become such that some one star loses its show so far as to this depth;[1] and as the brightest handmaid of the sun comes farther on, so the heaven is closed from light to light, even to the most beautiful. Not otherwise the Triumph, that plays forever round the Point which vanquished me, seeming enclosed by that which it encloses, little by little to my sight was extinguished;[2] wherefore my seeing nothing, and my love constrained me to turn with my eyes to Beatrice. If what has been said of her so far as here were all included in a single praise, it would be little to furnish out this turn. The beauty which I saw transcends measure not only by us, but truly I believe that its Maker alone can enjoy it all.

[1] When it is noon, — the sixth hour, — six thousand miles away from us to the east, it is about daybreak where we are; the shadow of the earth lies in the plane of vision, and with the growing light the stars one after another become invisible at this depth, that is, to one on earth.

[2] Losing itself in the light which streams from the Divine point.

By this pass I concede myself vanquished more than ever comic or tragic poet was overcome by crisis of his theme. For as the sun does to the sight which trembles most, even so remembrance of the sweet smile deprives my mind of its very self. From the first day that I saw her face in this life, even to this look, the following with my song has not been interrupted for me, but now needs must my pursuit desist from further following her beauty in my verse, as at his utmost every artist.

Such, as I leave her to a greater heralding than that of my trumpet, which is bringing its arduous theme to a close, with act and voice of a trusty leader she began again. “We have issued forth from the greatest body[1] to the Heaven[2] which is pure light: light intellectual full of love, love of true good, full of joy; joy which transcends every sweetness. Here thou shalt see one and the other host of Paradise;[3] and the one in those aspects which thou shalt see at the Last Judgment.”

[1] The Primum Mobile, the greatest of the material spheres of the universe.

[2] The Empyrean.

[3] The spirits of the redeemed who fought against the temptations of the world, and the good angels who fought against the rebellious; and here the souls in bliss will be seen in their bodily shapes.

As a sudden flash which scatters the spirits of the sight so that it deprives the eye of the action of the strongest objects,[1] thus a vivid light shone round about me, and left me swathed with such a veil of its own effulgence that nothing was visible to me.

1] So that the clearest objects produce no effect upon the eye.

"The Love which quieteth this Heaven always welcomes to itself with such a salutation, in order to make the candle ready for its flame." No sooner had these brief words come within me than I comprehended that I was surmounting above my own power; and I rekindled me with a new vision, such that no light is so pure that my eyes had not sustained it. And I saw light in form of a river, bright with effulgence, between two banks painted with a marvellous spring. Out of this stream were issuing living sparks, and on every side were setting themselves in the flowers, like rubies which gold encompasses. Then, as if inebriated by the odors, they plunged again into the wonderful flood, and as one was entering another was issuing forth.

"The high desire which now inflames and urges thee to have knowledge concerning that which thou seest, Pleases me the more the more it swells, but thou must needs drink of this water before so great a thirst, in thee be slaked." Thus the Sun of my eyes said to me; thereon she added, "The stream, and the topazes which enter and issue, and the smiling of the herbage, are foreshadowing prefaces of their truth;[1] not that these things are in themselves immature,[2] but there is defect on thy part who hast not yet vision so lofty."

[1] The stream, the sparks, the flowers are not such in reality as they seem to be; they are but images foreshadowing the truth.

[2] The things show themselves as they are, but the eyes cannot yet see them correctly.

There is no babe who so hastily springs with face toward the milk, if he awake much later than his wont, as I did, to make better mirrors yet of my eyes, stooping to the wave which flows in order that one may be bettered in it. And even as the eaves of my eyelids drank of it, so it seemed to me from its length to become round. Then as folk who have been under masks, who seem other than before, if they divest themselves of the semblance not their own in which they disappeared, thus for me the flowers and the sparks were changed into greater festival, so that I saw both the Courts of Heaven manifest.

O splendor of God, by means of which I saw the high triumph of the true kingdom, give me power to tell how I saw it!

Light is thereabove which makes the Creator visible to that creature which has its peace only in seeing Him; and it is extended in a circular figure so far that its circumference would be too wide a girdle for the sun. Its whole appearance is made of a ray reflected from the summit of the First Moving Heaven,[1] which therefrom takes its life and potency. And as a hill mirrors itself in water at its base, as if to see itself adorned, rich as it is with verdure and with flowers, so ranged above the light, round and round about, on more than a thousand seats, I saw mirrored all who of us have returned on high. And if the lowest row gather within itself so great a light, how vast is the spread of this rose in its outermost leaves! My sight lost not itself in the breadth and in the height, but took in all the quantity and the quality of that joy. There near and far nor add nor take away; for where God immediately governs the natural law is of no relevancy.

[1] The Primum Mobile.

Into the yellow of the sempiternal rose, which spreads wide, rises in steps, and is redolent with odor of praise unto the Sun that makes perpetual spring, Beatrice, like one who is silent and wishes to speak, drew me, and said, “Behold, how vast is the convent of the white stoles![1] See our city, how wide its circuit! See our benches so full that few people are now awaited here. On that great seat, on which thou holdest thine eye because of the crown which already is set above it, ere thou suppest at this wedding feast will sit the soul (which below will be imperial) of the high Henry who, to set Italy straight, will come ere she is ready.[2] The blind cupidity which bewitches you has made you like the little child who dies of hunger, and drives away his nurse. And such a one will then be prefect in the divine forum that openly or covertly he will not go with him along one road;[3] but short while thereafter shall he be endured by God in the holy office; for he shall be thrust down for his deserts, there where Simon Magus is, and shall make him of Anagna go lower.”

[1] “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” — Revelation, iii. 5.

[2] Henry VII., Emperor 1308, crowned at Milan 1311, died 1313.

[3] The Pope Clement V. ostensibly supported the Emperor Henry VII. in his Italian expedition, but secretly manoeuvred against him. He died in 1314, eight months after the death of Henry. Beatrice here condemns him to the third bolgia of the eighth circle of Hell, whither he was to follow Boniface VIII., — him of Anagna, — and push him deeper in the hole where the simoniacal Popes were punished, Cf. Hell, XIX.

CANTO XXXI.

The Rose of Paradise. — St. Bernard. — Prayer to Beatrice. — The glory of the Blessed Virgin.

In form then of a pure white rose the holy host was shown to me, which, in His own blood, Christ made His bride. But the other,[1] which, flying, sees and sings the glory of Him who enamours it, and the goodness which made it so great, like a swarm of bees which one while are among the flowers and anon return to the place where their work gets its savor, were descending into the great flower which is adorned with so many leaves, and thence rising up again to where their love always abides. Their faces all were of living flame, and their wings of gold, and the rest so white that no snow reaches that extreme. When they descended into the flower, from bench to bench, they imparted somewhat of the peace and of the ardor which they acquired as they fanned their sides. Nor did the interposing of such a flying plenitude between what was above and the flower impede the sight and the splendor; for the divine light penetrates through the universe, according as it is worthy, so that naught can be an obstacle to it. This secure and joyous realm, thronged with aneient and with modern folk, had all its look and love upon one mark.

[1] The angelic host.

O Trinal Light, which in a single star, scintillating on their sight, so satisfies them, look down here upon our tempest!

If the Barbarians, coming from a region such that every day it is covered by Helice,[1] revolving with her son of whom she is fond, when they beheld Rome and her arduous work, were wonderstruck, what time Lateran rose above mortal things,[2] I, who to the divine from the human, to the eternal from the temporal, had come, and from Florence to a people just and sane, with what amazement must I have been full! Surely what with it and the joy I was well pleased not to hear, and to stand mute. And as a pilgrim who is refreshed in the temple of his vow in looking round, and hopes now to report how it was, so, journeying through the living light, I carried my eyes over the ranks, now up, now down, and now circling about. I saw faces persuasive to love, beautified by the light of Another and by their own smile, and actions ornate with every dignity.

[1] The nymph Callisto or Helice bore to Zeus a son, Arcas; she was metamorphosed by Hera into a bear, and then transferred to Heaven by Jupiter as the constellation of the Great Bear, while her son was changed into the constellation of Aretophylax or Bootes. In the far north these constellations remain always above the horizon.

[2] When Rome was mistress of the world, and the Lateran the seat of imperial or papal power.

My look had now comprehended the general form of Paradise as a whole, and on no part yet my sight was fixed; and I turned me with re-enkindled wish to ask my Lady about things concerning which my mind was in suspense. One thing I was meaning, and another answered me; I was thinking to see Beatrice, and I saw an old man, robed like the people in glory. His eyes and his cheeks were overspread with benignant joy, in pious mien such as befits a tender father. And, "Where is she?" on a sudden said I. Whereon he, "To terminate thy desire, Beatrice urged me from my place, and if thou lookest up to the third circle from the highest step, thou wilt again see her upon the throne which her merits have allotted to her." Without answering I lifted up my eyes, and saw her as she made for herself a crown, reflecting from herself the eternal rays. From that region which thunders highest up no mortal eye is so far distant, in whatsoever sea it loses itself the lowest,[1] as there from Beatrice was my sight. But this was naught to me, for her image did not descend to me blurred by aught between.

[1] From the highest region of the air to the lowest depth of the sea.

"O Lady, in whom my hope is strong, and who, for my salvation, didst endure to leave thy footprints in Hell, of all those things which I have seen, I recognize by thy power and by thy goodness the grace and the virtue. Thou hast drawn me from servitude to liberty by all those ways, by all the modes whereby thou hadst the power to do this. Guard thou in me thine own magnificence so that my soul, which thou hast made whole, may, pleasing to thee, be unloosed from the body." Thus I prayed; and she, so distant, smiled, as it seemed, and looked at me; then turned to the eternal fountain.

And the holy old man, "In order that thou mayest complete perfectly," he said, "thy journey, whereto prayer and holy love sent me, fly with thy eyes through this garden; for seeing it will prepare thy look to mount further through the divine radiance. And the Queen of Heaven, for whom I burn wholly with love, will grant us every grace, because I am her faithful Bernard."[1]

[1] St. Bernard, to whom, because of his fervent devotion to her, the Blessed Virgin had deigned to show herself during his life.

As is he who comes perchance from Croatia to see our Veronica,[1] who is not satisfied by its ancient fame, but says in thought, while it is shown, "My Lord Jesus Christ, true God, now was your semblance like to this?" such was I, gazing on the living charity of him who, in this world, in contemplation, tasted of that peace.

[1] The likeness of the Saviour miraculously impressed upon the kerchief presented to him by a holy woman, on his way to Calvary, wherewith to wipe the sweat and dust from his face, and now religiously preserved at Rome, and shown at St. Peter's, on certain holydays.

“Son of Grace, this glad existence,” began he, “will not be known to thee holding thine eyes only below here at the bottom, but look on the circles even to the most remote, until thou seest upon her seat the Queen to whom this realm is subject and devoted.” I lifted up my eyes; and as at morning the eastern parts of the horizon surpass that where the sun declines, thus, as if going with my eyes from valley to mountain, I saw a part on the extreme verge vanquishing in light all the other front. And even as there where the pole which Phaeton guided ill is awaited,[1] the flame is brighter, and on this side and that the light grows less, so that pacific oriflamme was vivid at the middle, and on each side in equal measure the flame slackened. And at that mid part I saw more than a thousand jubilant Angels with wings outspread, each distinct both in brightness and in act. I saw there, smiling at their sports and at their songs, a Beauty[2] which was joy in the eyes of all the other saints. And if I had such wealth in speech as in imagining, I should. not dare to attempt the least of its delightfulness. Bernard, when he saw my eyes fixed and intent upon its warm glow, turned his own with such affection to it, that he made mine more ardent to gaze anew.

[1] Where the chariot of the sun is about to rise.

[2] The Virgin.

CANTO XXXII.

St. Bernard describes the order of the Rose, and points out many of the Saints. — The children in Paradise. — The angelic festival. — The patricians of the Court of Heaven.

Fixed in affection upon his Delight, that contemplator freely assumed the office of a teacher, and began these holy words: “The wound which Mary closed up and anointed, she who is so beautiful at her feet is she who opened it and who pierced it. Beneath her, in the order which the third seats make, sits Rachel with Beatrice, as thou seest. Sara, Rebecca, Judith, and she[1] who was great-grandmother of the singer who, through sorrow for his sin, said Miserere mei,[2] thou mayest see thus from step to step in gradation downward, as with the name of each I go downward through the rose from leaf to leaf. And from the seventh row downwards, even as down to it, Hebrew women follow in succession, dividing all the tresses of the flower; because these are the wall by which the sacred stairways are separated according to the look which faith turned on Christ. On this side, where the flower is mature with all its leaves, are seated those who believed in Christ about to come. On the other side, where the semicircles are broken by empty spaces, are those who turned their faces on Christ already come.[3] And as on this side the glorious seat of the Lady of Heaven, and the other seats below it, make so great a division, thus, opposite, does that of the great John, who, ever holy, endured the desert and martyrdom, and then Hell for two years;[4] and beneath him Francis and Benedict and Augustine and others are allotted thfis to divide, far down as here from circle to circle. Now behold the high divine foresight; for one and the other aspect of the faith will fill this garden equally. And know that downwards from the row which midway cleaves[5] the two divisions, they are seated for no merit of their own, but for that of others, under certain conditions; for all these are spirits absolved ere they had true election. Well canst thou perceive it by their looks, and also by their childish voices, if thou lookest well upon them and if thou listenest to them. Now thou art perplexed, and in perplexity art silent; but I will loose for thee the strong bond in which thy subtile thoughts fetter thee.[6] Within the amplitude of this realm a casual point can have no place,[7] any more than sadness, or thirst, or hunger; for whatever thou seest is established by eternal law, so that here the ring answers exactly to the finger. And therefore this folk,[8] hastened to true life, is not sine causa more and less excellent here among itself. The King through whom this realm reposes in such great love and in such great delight that no will is venturesome for more, creating all the minds in His own glad aspect, diversely

endows with grace according to His own pleasure; and here let the fact suffice.[9] And this is expressly and clearly noted for you in the Holy Scripture in those twins who, while within their mother, had their anger roused.[10] Therefore, according to the color of the hair of such grace,[11] it behoves the highest light befittingly to crown them. Without, then, merit from their modes of Efe, they are placed in different grades, differing only in their primary keenness of vision.[12] Thus in the fresh centuries the faith of parents alone sufficed, together with innocence, to secure salvation. After the first ages were, complete, it was needful for males with their innocent plumage to acquire virtue through circumcision. But after the time of grace had come, without perfect baptism in Christ, such minocence was kept there below.

[1] Ruth.

[2] "Have mercy upon me." — Psalm li. 1.

[3] The circle of the Rose is divided in two equal parts. In the one half, the saints of the Old Dispensation, who believed in Christ about to come, are seated. The benches of this half are full. In the other half, the benches of which are not yet quite full, sit the redeemed of the New Dispensation who have believed on Christ already come. On one side the line of division between the semicircles is made by the Hebrew women from the Virgin Mary downwards; on the opposite side the line is made by St. John Baptist and other saints who had rendered special service to Christ and his Church. The lower tiers of seats all round are occupied by children elect to bliss.

[4] The two years from the death of John to the death of Christ and his descent to Hell, to draw from the limbus patrum the souls predestined to salvation.

[5] Horizontally.

[6] The perplexity was, How can there be difference of merit in the innocent, assigning them to different seats in Paradise?

[7] No least thing can here be matter of chance.

[8] This childish folk.

[9] Without attempt to account for it, to seek the wherefore of the will of God.

[10] Jacob and Esau. See Genesis, xxv. 22.

[11] The crown of light and the station in Paradise axe allotted according to the diversity in the endowment of grace, which is like the diversity in the color of the hair of men.

[12] In capacity to see God.

"Look now upon the face which most resembles Christ, for only its brightness can prepare thee to see Christ."

I saw raining upon her such great joy borne in the holy minds created to fly across through that height, that whatsoever I had seen before had not rapt me with such great admiration, nor shown to me such likeness to God. And that love which had first descended there, in front of her spread wide his wings, singing "Ave, Maria, gratia plena." The blessed Court responded to the divine song from all parts, so that every countenance became thereby serener.

“O holy Father, who for me submittest to be below here, leaving the sweet place in which thou sittest through eternal allotment, who is that Angel who with such jubilee looks into the eyes of our Queen, so enamoured that he seems of fire?” Thus I again had recourse to the teaching of him who was made beautiful by Mary, as the morning star by the sun. And he to me, “Confidence and grace as much as there can be in Angel and in soul, axe all in him, and so we would have it be, for he it is who bore the palm down to Mary, when the Son of God willed to load Himself with our burden.

“But come now with thine eyes, as I shall go on speaking, and note the great patricians of this most just and pious empire. Those two who sit there above, most happy through being nearest to the Empress, are, as it were, the two roots of this rose. He who on the left is close to her is the Father through whose rash taste the human race tastes so much bitterness. On the right thou seest that ancient Father of Holy Church, to whom Christ entrusted the keys of this lovely flower. And he who saw before his death all the heavy times of the beautiful bride, who was won with the lance and with the nails, sits at his side; and alongside the other rests that leader, under whom the ingrate, fickle and stubborn people lived on manna. Opposite Peter thou seest Anna sitting, so content to gaze upon her daughter, that she moves not her eyes while singing Hosannah; and opposite the eldest father of a family sits Lucia, who moved thy Lady, when thou didst bend thy brow to rush downward.

“But because the time flies which holds thee slumbering,[1] here will we make a stop, like a good tailor who makes the gown according as he has cloth, and we will direct our eyes to the First Love, so that, looking towards Him, thou mayst penetrate so far as is possible through His effulgence. Truly, lest perchance, moving thy wings, thou go backward, believing to advance, it is needful that grace be obtained by prayer; grace from her who has the power to aid thee; and do thou follow me with thy affection so that thy heart depart not from my speech.”

[1] This is the single passage in which Dante implies that his vision is of the nature of a dream.

And he began this holy supplication.

CANTO XXXIII.

Prayer to the Virgin. — The Beatific Vision. — The Ultimate Salvation.

"Virgin Mother, daughter of thine own Son, humble and exalted more than any creature, fixed term of the eternal counsel, thou art she who didst so ennoble human nature that its own Maker disdained not to become His own making. Within thy womb was rekindled the Love through whose warmth this flower has thus blossomed in the eternal peace. Here thou art to us the noonday torch of charity, and below, among mortals, thou art the living fount of hope. Lady, thou art so great, and so availest, that whoso wishes grace, and has not recourse to thee, wishes his desire to fly without wings. Thy benignity not only succors him who asks, but oftentimes freely foreruns the asking. In thee mercy, in thee pity, in thee magnificence, in thee whatever of goodness is in any creature, are united. Now doth this man, who, from the lowest abyss of the universe, far even as here, has seen one by one the lives of spirits, supplicate thee, through grace, for virtue such that he may be able with his eyes to uplift himself higher toward the Ultimate Salvation. And I, who never for my own vision burned more than I do for his, proffer to thee all my prayers, and pray that they be not scant, that with thy prayers thou wouldest dissipate for him every cloud of his mortality, so that the Supreme Pleasure may be displayed to him. Further I pray thee, Queen, who canst whatso thou wilt, that, after so great a vision, thou wouldest preserve his affections sound. May thy guardianship vanquish human impulses. Behold Beatrice with all the Blessed for my prayers clasp their hands to thee."[1]

[1] In the Second Nun's Tale Chaucer has rendered, with great beauty, the larger part of this prayer.

The eyes beloved and revered by God, fixed on the speaker, showed to us how pleasing unto her are devout prayers. Then to the Eternal Light were they directed, on which it is not to be believed that eye so clear is turned by any creature.

And I, who to the end of all desires was approaching, even as I ought, ended within myself the ardor of my longing.[1] Bernard was beckoning to me, and was smiling, that I should look upward; but I was already, of my own accord, such as he wished; for my sight, becoming pure, was entering more and more through the radiance of the lofty Light which of itself is true.

[1] The ardor of longing ceased, as was natural, in the consummation and enjoyment of desire.

Thenceforward my vision was greater than our speech, which yields to such a sight, and the memory yields to such excess.[1]

[1] Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became."
— In Memoriam, XCV.

As is he who dreaming sees, and after the dream the passion remains imprinted, and the rest returns not to the mind, such am I; for my vision almost wholly fails, while the sweetness that was born of it yet distils within my heart. Thus the snow is by the sun unsealed; thus on the wind, in the light leaves, was lost the saying of the Sibyl.

O Supreme Light, that so high upliftest Thyself from mortal conceptions, re-lend a little to my mind of what Thou didst appear, and make my tongue so powerful that it may be able to leave one single spark of Thy glory for the future people; for, by returning somewhat to my memory and by sounding a little in these verses, more of Thy victory shall be conceived.

I think that by the keenness of the living ray which I endured, I should have been bewildered if my eyes had been averted from it. And it comes to my mind that for this reason I was the more hardy to sustain so much, that I joined my look unto the Infinite Goodness.

O abundant Grace, whereby I presumed to fix my eyes through the Eternal Light so far that there I consumed my sight!

In its depth I saw that whatsoever is dispersed through the universe is there included, bound with love in one volume; substance and accidents and their modes, fused together, as it were, in such wise, that that of which I speak is one simple Light. The universal form of this knot[1] I believe that I saw, because in saying this I feel that I more at large rejoice. One instant only is greater oblivion for me than five and twenty centuries to the emprise which made Neptune wonder at the shadow of Argo.[2]

[1] This union of substance and accident and their modes; the unity of creation in the Creator.

[2] The mysteries of God vanish in an instant from memory, but the larger joy felt in recording them is proof that they were seen.

Thus my mind, wholly rapt, was gazing fixed, motionless, and intent, and ever with gazing grew enkindled. In that Light one becomes such that it is impossible he should ever consent to turn himself from it for other sight; because the Good which is the object of the will is all collected in it, and outside of it that is defective which is perfect there.

Now will my speech be shorter, even in respect to that which I remember, than an infant's who still bathes his tongue at the breast. Not because more than

one simple semblance was in the Living Light wherein I was gazing, which is always such as it was before; but through my sight, which was growing strong in me as I looked, one sole appearance, as I myself changed, was altering itself to me.

Within the profound and clear subsistence of the lofty Light appeared to me three circles of three colors and of one dimension; and one appeared reflected by the other, as Iris by Iris,[1] and the third appeared fire which from the one and from the other is equally breathed forth.

[1] As one arch of the rainbow by the other.

O how short is the telling, and how feeble toward my conception! and this toward what I saw is such that it suffices not to call it little.

O Light Eternal, that sole dwellest in Thyself, sole understandest Thyself, and, by Thyself understood and understanding, lovest and smilest on Thyself! That circle, which, thus conceived, appeared in Thee as a reflected light, being somewhile regarded by my eyes, seemed to me depicted within itself, of its own very color, by our effigy, wherefore my sight was wholly set upon it. As is the geometer who wholly applies himself to measure the circle, and finds not by thinking that principle of which he is in need, such was I at that new sight. I wished to see how the image accorded with the circle, and how it has its place therein; but my own wings were not for this, had it not been that my mind was smitten by a flash in which its wish came.

To my high fantasy here power failed; but now my desire and my will, like a wheel which evenly is moved, the Lovee was turning which moves the Sun and the other stars.

The Italian Texts

Statue of Dante - Basilica di Santa Croce, Florence

LIST OF WORKS

Verse

IL FIORE
DETTO D'AMORE
LE RIME
LA VITA NUOVA
IL CONVIVIO
DIVINA COMMEDIA
EGLOGHE
EGLOGHE ED ALTRI VERSI LATINI (TRADUZIONE) di Filippo Scolari

Essays

DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA
DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA (TRADUZIONE) di Gian Giorgio Trissino
IL DE MONARCHIA
IL DE MONARCHIA (TRADUZIONE) di Marsilio Ficino
EPISTOLA XIII A CANGRANDE DELLA SCALA

Verse

IL FIORE

Questo è un poemetto che contiene 232 sonetti, che alcuni critici hanno attribuito a Dante. Si tratta di una riscrittura compendiosa del *Roman de la Rose* e *Il Fiore* risale a un periodo compreso tra 1283 e 1287.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Manoscritto del Roman de la Rose (1420 - '30).

I *Lo Dio d’Amor con su’ arco mi trasse*

Perch’i’ guardava un fior che m’abellia,
Lo quale avea piantato Cortesia
Nel giardin di Piacer; e que’ vi trasse
Sì tosto c[h]’a me parve ch’e’ volasse,
E disse: “I’ sì ti tengo in mia balìa”.
Alló·gli pia[c]que, non per voglia mia,
Che di cinque saette mi piagasse.
La prima à non’ Bieltà: per li oc[c]hi il core
Mi passò; la seconda, Angelicanza:
Quella mi mise sopra gran fredore;
La terza Cortesia fu, san’ dottanza;
La quarta, Compagnia, che fe’ dolore;
La quinta apella l’uon Buona Speranza.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

II *L’Amante e Amore*

Sentendomi ismagato malamente
Del molto sangue ch’io avea perduto,
E non sapea dove trovar aiuto,
Lo Dio d’Amor sì venne a me presente,
E dissemi: “Tu·ssai veramente
Che·ttu mi se’ intra·lle man caduto
Per le saette di ch’i’ t’ò feruto,
Sì ch’e’ convien che·ttu mi sie ubidente”.
Ed i’ risposi: “I’ sì son tutto presto
Di farvi pura e fina fedeltate,
Più ch’asses[s]ino a·Veglio o a Dio il Presto”.
E quelli allor mi puose, in veritate,
La sua boc[c]a a la mia, sanz’altro aresto,
E disse: “Pensa di farmi lealtate”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

III *L’Amante e Amore*

Del mese di genaio, e non di mag[g]io,
Fu quand’i’ presi Amor a signoria,
E ch’i’ mi misi al tutto in sua baglìa
E saramento gli feci e omaggio;
E per più sicurtà gli diedi in gaggio
Il cor, ch’e’ non avesse gelosia
Ched’i’ fedel e puro i’ no·gli sia,
E sempre lui tener a segnó·maggio.
Allor que’ prese il cor e disse: “Amico,
I’ son segnor assà’ forte a servire;
Ma chi mi serve, per certo ti dico
Ch’a la mia grazia non può già fallire,
E di buona speranza il mi notrico
Insin ch’i’ gli fornisca su’ disire”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

IV *L’Amante e Amore*

Con una chiave d’or mi fermò il core
L’Amor, quando così m’eb[b]e parlato;
Ma primamente l’à nett’e parato,
Sì c[h]’ogn’altro pensier n’à pinto fore.
E po’ mi disse: “I’ sì son tu’ signore,
E tu sì se’ di me fedel giurato:
Or guarda che ‘l tu’ cuor non sia ‘mpacciato
Se non di fino e di leal amore.
E pensa di portar in pacienza
La pena che per me avrà’ a sofrire
Inanzi ch’io ti doni mia sentenza;
Ché molte volte ti parrà morire:
Un’ora gioia avrai, altra, doglienza;
Ma poi dono argomento di guerire”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

V *L’Amante e Amore*

Con grande umilitate e pacienza
Promisi a Amor a sofferir sua pena,
E c[h]’ogne membro, ch’i’ avea, e vena
Disposat’era a farli sua voglienza;
E solo a lui servir la mia credenza
E` ferma, né di ciò mai nonn-alena:
“Insin ched i’ avrò spirito o lena,
I’ non farò da·cciò giamà’ partenza”.
E quelli allor mi disse: “Amico meo,
I’ ò da·tte miglior pegno che carte:
Fa che m’adori, ched i’ son tu’ deo;
Ed ogn’altra credenza metti a parte,
Né non creder né Luca né Matteo
Né Marco né Giovanni”. Allor si parte.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

VI *L’Amante e lo Schifo*

Partes’Amor [le] su’ ale battendo
E ‘n poca d’or sì forte isvanoìo
Ched i’ no’l vidi poi, né no·ll’udìo,
E·llui e ‘l su’ soccorso ancor atendo.
Allor mi venni forte ristrignendo
Verso del fior, che·ssì forte m’ulìo,
E per cu’ feci homag[g]io a questo dio,
E dissi: “Chi mi tien, ched i’ no’l prendo?”;
Sì ch’i’ verso del fior tesi la mano,
Credendolo aver colto chitamente;
Ed i’ vidi venir un gran villano
Con una maz[z]a, e disse: “Or ti ste’ a mente
Ch’i’ son lo Schifo, e sì son ortolano
D’esto giardin; i’ ti farò dolente”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

VII *L’Amante*

Molto vilmente mi buttò di fora
Lo Schifo, crudo, fello e oltrag[g]ioso,
Sì che del fior non cred’esser gioioso,
Se Pietate e Franchez[z]a no·ll’acora;
Ma prima, credo, conver[r]à ch’eo mora,
Perché ‘l me’ cor [i]stà tanto doglioso
Di quel villan, che stava là nascoso,
Di cu’ no·mmi prendea guardia quell’ora.
Or m’à messo in pensero e in dottanza
Di ciò ched i’ credea aver per certano,
Sì c[h]’or me ne par essere in bilanza.
E tutto ciò m’à fatto quello strano;
Ma di lui mi richiamo a Pietanza,
Che venga a·llui collo spunton i·mmano.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

VIII *L’Amante*

Se mastro Argus[so], che fece la nave
In che Giason andò per lo tosone,
E fece a conto regole e ragione
E le diece figure, com’on save,
Vivesse, gli sareb[b]e forte e grave
Multiplicar ben ogne mia quistione
C[h]’Amor mi move, sanza mesprigione;
E di ciascuna porta esso la chiave,
Ed àllemi nel cor fermate e messe
Con quella chiavicella ch’i’ v’ò detto,
Per ben tenermi tutte sue promesse:
Per ch’io a·ssue merzé tuttor mi metto;
Ma ben vor[r]è’ che, quando gli piacesse,
E’ m’alleg[g]iasse il mal che·ssì m’à stretto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

IX *L’Amante e Ragione*

Dogliendomi in pensando del villano
Che·ssì vilmente dal fior m’à ‘lungiato,
Ed i’ mi riguardai dal dritto lato,
E sì vidi Ragion col viso piano
Venir verso di me, e per la mano
Mi prese e disse: “Tu·sse’ sì smagrato!
I’ credo che·ttu à’ troppo pensato
A que’ che·tti farà gittar in vano,
Ciò è Amor, a cui dat’ài fidanza.
Ma·sse m’avessi avuto al tu’ consiglio,
Tu non saresti gito co·llui a danza:
Ché, sie certano, a cu’ e’ dà di piglio,
Egli ‘l tiene in tormento e malenanza,
Sì che su’ viso nonn-è mai vermiglio”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

X *L’Amante*

Udendo che Ragion mi gastigava
Perch’i’ al Die d’Amor era ‘nservito,
Di ched i’ era forte impalidito,
E sol perch’io a·llui troppo pensava,
I’ le dissi: “Ragion, e’ no·mi grava
Su’ mal, ch’i’ ne sarò tosto guerito,
Ché questo mio signor lo m’à gradito”,
E ch’era folle se più ne parlava;
“Ched i’ son fermo pur di far su’ grado,
Perciò ch’e’ mi promise fermamente
Ched e’ mi mettereb[b]e in alto grado
Sed i’ ‘l servisse bene e lealmente”:
Per che di lei i’ non pregiava un dado,
Né su’ consiglio i’ non teneva a mente.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XI *L’Amante e Amico*

Ragion si parte, udendomi parlare,
E me fu ricordato ch’i’ avea
Un grande amico, lo qual mi solea
In ogne mio sconforto confortare;
Sì ch’i’ no’l misi guari a ritrovare,
E dissigli com’e’ si contenea
Lo Schifo ver’ di me, e ch’e’ parea
Ch’al tutto mi volesse guer[r]eggiare.
E que’ mi disse: “Amico, sta sicuro,
Ché quello Schifo si à sempre in usanza
Ch’a·cominciar si mostra acerbo e duro.
Ritorna a·llui e non ab[b]ie dottanza:
Con umiltà tosto l’avrà’ maturo,
Già tanto non par fel né san’ pietanza”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XII *L’Amante*

Tutto pien d’umiltà verso ‘l giardino
Torna’mi, com’Amico avea parlato,
Ed i’ guardai, e sì eb[b]i avisato
Lo Schifo, con un gran baston di pino,
Ch’andava riturando ogne camino,
Che dentro a forza non vi fosse ‘ntrato;
Sì ch’io mi trassi a lui, e salutato
Umilemente l’eb[b]i a capo chino,
E sì gli dissi: “Schifo, ag[g]ie merzede
Di me, se ‘nverso te feci alcun fallo,
Chéd i’ sì son venuto a pura fede
A tua merzede, e presto d’amendarlo”.
Que’ mi riguarda, e tuttor si provede
Ched i’ non dica ciò per ingan[n]arlo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XIII *Franchezza*

Sì com’i’ stava in far mia pregheria
A quel fellon ch’è sì pien d’arditez[z]a,
Lo Dio d’Amor sì vi man[dò] Franchez[z]a,
Co·llei Pietà, per sua ambasceria.
Franchez[z]a cominciò la diceria,
E disse: “Schifo, tu·ffai stranez[z]a
A quel valletto ch’è pien di larghez[z]a
E prode e franco, sanza villania.
Lo Dio d’Amor ti manda ch’e’ ti piaccia
Che·ttu non sie sì strano al su’ sergente,
Ché gran peccato fa chi lui impaccia;
Ma sòffera ch’e’ vada arditamente
Per lo giardino, e no’l metter in caccia,
E guardi il fior che·ssì gli par aolente”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XIV *Pietà* Pietà cominciò poi su’ parlamento,
Con lagrime bagnando il su’ visag[g]io,
Dicendo: “Schifo, tu faresti oltrag[g]io
Di non far grazia al meo domandamento.
Pregar ti fo che·tti si’a piacimento
Ch’a quel valletto, ch’è·ssì buon e saggio,
Tu non sie verso lui così salvaggio,
Ché sai ch’e’ non à mal intendimento.
Or avén detto tutto nostr’affare
E la cagion per che no’ siàn venute:
Molt’è crudel chi per noi non vuol fare!
Ancor ti manda molte di salute
Il lasso cu’ ti pia[c]que abandonare:
Fa che nostre preghiere i sian valute!”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XV *Lo Schifo*

Lo Schifo disse: “Gente messag[g]iere,
Egli è ben dritto ch’a vostra domanda
I’ faccia grazia, e ragion lo comanda:
Ché voi non siete orgogliose né fiere,
Ma siete molto nobili parliere.
Venga il valetto e vada a sua comanda,
Ma non ched egli al fior sua mano ispanda,
Ch’a·cciò no·gli varrian vostre preghiere;
Perciò che·lla figl[i]uola Cortesia,
Bellacoglienza, ch’è dama del fiore,
Sì ‘l mi por[r]eb[b]e a gran ricredentia.
Ma fate che·lla madre al Die d’Amore
Faccia a Bellacoglienza pregheria
Di lui, e che·lle scaldi un poco il core”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XVI *L’Amante e lo Schifo*

Quand’i’ vidi lo Schifo sì adolzito,
Che solev’esser più amar che fele
Ed i’ ‘l trovà’ vie più dolce che mele,
Sap[p]iate ch’i’ mi tenni per guerito.
Nel giardin me n’andai molto gichito
Per dotta di misfar a quel crudele,
E gli giurai a le sante guagnele
Che per me non sareb[b]e mai marrito.
Allor mi disse: “I’ vo’ ben che·ttu venghi
Dentr’al giardin[o] sì com’e’ ti piace,
Ma’ che lungi dal fior le tue man tenghi.
Le buone donne fatt’ànno far pace
Tra me e te: or fa che·lla mantenghi,
Sì che verso di me no sie fallace”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XVII *Venùs*

Venusso, ch’è socorso degli amanti,
Ven[n]’a Bellacoglienza col brandone,
E sì·recava a guisa di penone
Per avampar chiunque l’è davanti.
A voler racontar de’ suo’ sembianti
E de la sua tranobile faz[z]one,
Sareb[b]e assai vie più lungo sermone
Ch’a sermonar la vita a tutti i santi.
Quando Bellacoglienza sentì ‘l caldo
Di quel brandon che così l’avampava,
Sì tosto fu ‘l su’ cuor col mio saldo;
E Venusso, ch’a·cciò la confortava,
Si trasse verso lei col viso baldo,
Dicendo che ve·me troppo fallava.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XVIII *Venùs e Bellacoglienza*

“Tu falli trop[p]o verso quell’amante”,
Disse Venus[so], “che cotanto t’ama;
Néd i’ non so al mondo sì gran dama
Che di lui dovess’es[s]er rifusante,
Ch’egli è giovane, bello e avenante,
Cortese, franco e pro’, di buona fama.
Promettili un basciar, e a·tte ‘l chiama,
Ch’e’ non à uon nel mondo più celante”.
Bellacoglienza disse: “I’ vo’ che vegna,
E basci il fior che tanto gli è [‘n] piacere,
Ma’ ched e’ sag[g]iamente si contegna;
Ché siate certa che no·m’è spiacere”.
“Or gli ne manda alcuna buona ‘nsegna”,
Disse Venùs, “e fagliele a·sapere”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XIX *L’Amante*

Per BelSembiante e per DolzeRiguardo
Mi mandò la piacente ch’i’ andasse
Nel su’ giardin e ch’io il fior bascias[s]e,
Né non portasse già lancia né dardo:
Ché lo Schifo era fatto sì codardo
Ch’e’ [no]·mi bisognava ch’i’ ‘l dottasse;
Ma tuttor non volea ched i’ v’entrasse,
Sed e’ non fosse notte ben a tardo.
“Perciò che Castità e Gelosia
Sì ànno messo Paura e Vergogna
In le’ guardar, che non faccia follia;
Ed un villan che truov’ogne menzogna
La guarda, il qual fu nato i·Normandia,
MalaBoc[c]a, que’ c[h]’ogne mal sampogna”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XX *L’Amante e Bellacoglienza*

Udendo quella nobile novella
Che que’ genti messag[g]i m’aportaro,
Sì fortemente il cuor mi confortaro
Che di gioia perdé’ quasi la favella.
Nel giardin me n’andà’ tutto ‘n gonella,
Sanz’armadura, com’e’ comandaro,
E sì trovai quella col viso chiaro,
Bellacoglienza; tosto a·ssé m’apella,
E disse: “Vien avanti e bascia ‘l fiore;
Ma guarda di far cosa che mi spiaccia,
Ché·ttu ne perderesti ogne mio amore”.
Sì ch’i’ alor feci croce de le braccia,
E sì ‘l basciai con molto gran tremore,
Sì forte ridottava suo minaccia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXI *L’Amante*

Del molto olor ch’al cor m’entrò basciando
Quel prezioso fior, che tanto aulia,
Contar né dir per me non si poria;
Ma dirò come ‘l mar s’andò turbando
Per MalaBoc[c]a, quel ladro normando,
Che se n’avide e svegliò Gelosia
E Castità, che ciascuna dormia;
Per ch’i’ fu’ del giardin rimesso in bando.
E sì vi conterò de la fortez[z]a
Dove Bellacoglienza fu ‘n pregione,
Ch’Amor abatté poi per su’ prodez[z]a;
E come Schifo mi tornò fellone
E lungo tempo mi ten[n]e in distrez[z]a,
E come ritornò a me Ragione.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXII *Castità*

Castità, che da Veno è guer[r]eggiata,
Sì disse a Gelosia: “Perdio, merzede!
S’a questo fatto l’uon non ci provede,
I’ potrè’ bentosto es[s]ere adontata.
Vergogna e Paura m’ànno abandonata;
In quello Schifo foll’è chi si crede,
Ch’i’ son certana ch’e’ non ama a fede,
Po’ del giardin sì mal guardò l’entrata;
Donde vo’ siete la miglior guardiana
Ch’i’ ‘n esto mondo potes[s]e trovare.
Gran luogo avete in Lombardia e ‘n Toscana.
Perdio, ched e’ vi piaccia il fior guardare!
Che se que’ che ‘l basciò punto lo sgrana,
non fia misfatto ch’uon poss’amendare”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXIII *Gelosia*

Gelosia disse: “I’ prendo a me la guarda,
Ch’a ben guardar il fior è mia credenza
Ch’i’ avrò gente di tal provedenza
Ched i’ non dotto già che Veno gli arda”.
Al giardin se n’andò fier’e gagliarda,
Ed ivi sì trovò Bellacoglienza
E dis[s]ele: “Tu à’ fatta tal fal[l]enza
Ch’i’ ti tengo per folle e per musarda.
Ed a voi dico, Paur’e Vergogna,
Che chi di fior guardar in voi si fida,
Certa son ch’e’ non à lett’a Bologna.
E quello Schifo che punt’or non grida,
Gli var[r]ia me’ ch’e’ fosse in Catalogna,
Sed e’ non guarda ben ciò ch’egli à ‘n guida”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXIV *Vergogna*

Vergogna contra terra il capo china,
Ché ben s’avide ch’ella avea fallato,
E d’un gran velo il viso avea velato;
E sì disse a Paura sua cugina:
“Paura, no’ siàn messe nell’aìna
Di Gelosia, e ciò ci à procacciato
Lo Schifo, perch’egli à corteseg[g]iato
Al bel valetto ch’i’ vid’ier mattina.
Or andiàn tosto e troviàn quel villano,
E gli dirén com’e’ fia malbalito
Se Gelosia gli mette adosso mano;
Ch[ed] egli à ‘n ben guardar troppo fallito,
Ch’e’ sì dé es[s]er a ciascuno strano,
E ‘l diavol si·ll’à ora incortesito”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXV *Vergogna e Paura*

Per lo Schifo trovar ciascun’andava,
Per dirli del misfatto molto male;
E que’ s’avea fatto un capez[z]ale
D’un fascio d’erba e sì son[n]iferava.
Vergogna fortemente lo sgridava;
Paura d’altra parte sì·ll’assale,
Dicendo: “Schifo, ben poco ti cale
Che Gelosia sì forte ne grava,
E ciò ci avien per te, quest’è palese.
Quando tu, per la tua malaventura,
Tu vuogli intender or d’es[s]er cortese
(Ben sa’ ch’e’ non ti move di natura!),
Con ciaschedun dé’ star a le difese
Per ben guardar questa nostra chiusura”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXVI *Lo Schifo*

Lo Schifo, quando udìo quel romore,
Conob[b]e ben ched egli avea mispreso,
Sì disse: “Il diavol ben m’avea sorpreso,
Quand’io a nessun uon mostrav’amore.
Ma s’i’, colui che ven[n]e per lo fiore,
I’ ‘l posso nel giardin tener mai preso,
I’ sia uguanno per la gola impeso
Sed i’ no’l fo morir a gran dolore”.
Allor ricigna il viso e gli oc[c]hi torna,
E troppo contra me tornò diverso:
Del fior guardar fortemente s’atorna.
A[h]i lasso, c[h]’or mi fu cambiato il verso!
In poca d’or sì ‘l fatto mi bistorna
Che d’abate tornai men ch’a converso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXVII *Gelosia*

Gelosia, che stava in sospeccione
Ch’ella del fior non fosse baratata,
Sì fe’ gridar per tutta la contrata
Ch’a·llei venisse ciascun buon maz[z]one,
Ch’ ella volea fondar una pregione
Dove Bellacoglienza fia murata;
Ché ‘n altra guardia non fie più lasciata,
Po’ ch’ella l’à trovata i·mesprigione:
“Ché la guardia del fior è perigliosa,
Sì saria folle se ‘llei mi fidasse
Per la bieltà ch’à ‘n lei maravigliosa”.
E se Venùs’ ancor la vicitasse,
Di ciò era certana, e non dottosa,
Ch’e’ conver[r]eb[b]e ch’ella il fior donasse.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXVIII *L’Amante*

Gelosia fece fondar un castello
Con gran fossi d’intorno e barbacani,
Ché molto ridottava uomini strani,
sì facev’ella que’ di su’ ostello;
E nel miluogo un casser fort’e bello,
Che non dottava as[s]alto di villani,
Fece murare a’ mastri più sovrani
Di marmo lavorato ad iscarpello;
E sì vi fece far quat[t]ro portali
Con gran tor[r]i di sopra imbertescate,
Ch’unque nel mondo non fur fatte tali;
E porte caditoie v’avea ordinate,
Che venian per condotto di canali:
L’altr’eran tutte di ferro sprangate.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXIX *L’Amante*

Quando Gelosia vide il castel fatto,
Sì si pensò d’avervi guernimento,
Ch[ed] e’ non era suo intendimento
Di renderlo per forza néd a patto.
Per dare a’ suo’ nemici mal atratto,
Vi mise dentro gran saettamento,
E pece e olio e ogn’altro argomento
Per arder castel di legname o gatto,
S’alcun lo vi volesse aprossimare:
Ché perduti ne son molti castelli
Per non prendersi guardia del cavare.
Ancor fe’ far traboc[c]hi e manganelli
Per li nemici lungi far istare
E servirli di pietre e di quadrelli.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXX *L’Amante*

Quand’ el[l]’eb[b]e il castel di guernigione
Fornito sì com’egli era mestiere,
Ad ogne porta mise su’ portiere,
De’ più fidati c[h]’avea in sua magione:
E perch’ella dottava tradigione,
Mise lo Schifo in sul portal primiere,
Perch’ella il sentia aspro cavaliere;
Al secondo, la figlia di Ragione,
Ciò fu Vergogna, che fe’ gran difensa;
La terza porta sì guardò Paura,
Ch’iera una donna di gran provedenza;
Al quarto portal, dietro da le mura,
Fu messo MalaBoc[c]a, la cui ‘ntenza
Ferm’iera a dir mal d’ogne criatura.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXI *L’Amante*

Bellacoglienza fu nella fortez[z]a
Per man di Gelosia mess’e fermata.
Ad una vec[c]hia l’eb[b]e acomandata
Che·lla tenesse tuttor in distrez[z]a;
Ch’ella dottava molto su’ bellez[z]a,
Che Castità à tuttor guer[r]eg[g]iata,
E Cortesia, di cu’ era nata,
No·lle facesse far del fior larghez[z]a.
Ver è ched ella sì ‘l fece piantare
Là ‘ve Bellacoglienza era ‘n pregione,
Ch’altrove no’l sapea dove fidare.
Lassù non dottav’ella tradigione,
Ché quella vec[c]hia, a cu’ ‘l diede a guardare,
Sì era del lignag[g]io Salvagnone.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXII *L’Amante*

Gelosia andava a proveder le porte,
Sì trovava le guardie ben intese
Contra ciascuno star a le difese
E per donar e per ricever morte;
E MalaBocca si sforzava forte
In ogne mi’ sacreto far palese:
Que’ fu ‘l nemico che più mi v’afese,
Ma sopra lui ricad[d]or poi le sorte.
Que’ non finava né notte né giorno
A suon di corno gridar: “Guarda, guarda!”;
E giva per le mura tutto ‘ntorno
Dicendo: “Tal è putta e tal si farda,
E la cotal à troppo caldo il forno,
E l’altra follemente altrù’ riguarda”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXIII *L’Amante*

Quand’i’ vidi i marosi sì ‘nforzare
Per lo vento a Provenza che ventava,
C[h]’alberi e vele e ancole fiac[c]ava,
E nulla mi valea il ben governare,
Fra me medesino comincià’ a pensare
Ch’era follia se più navicava,
Se quel maltempo prima non passava
Che dal buon porto mi facé’ alu[n]giare:
Sì ch’i’ allor m’ancolai a una piag[g]ia,
Veg[g]endo ch’i’ non potea entrar in porto:
La terra mi parea molto salvaggia.
I’ vi vernai co·molto disconforto.
Non sa che mal si sia chi non asaggia
Di quel d’Amor, ond’i’ fu’ quasi morto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXIV *L’Amante*

Pianto, sospiri, pensieri e afrizione
Eb[b]i vernando in quel salvag[g]io loco,
Ch’pena de·ninferno è riso e gioco
Ver’ quella ch’i’ soffersi a la stagione
C[h]’Amor mi mise a tal distruzione
Ch’e’ no·mi die’ sog[g]iorno as[s]à’ né poco:
Un’or mi tenne in ghiaccio, un’altra ‘n foco.
Molto m’atten[n]e ben sua promessione,
Ma non di gioia né di nodrimento:
Ch’e’ di speranza mi dovea nodrire
Insin ched e’ mi desse giug[g]iamento.
Digiunar me ne fece, a ver vo dire;
Ma davami gran pez[z]e di tormento,
Con salsa stemperata di languire.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXV *L’Amante e Ragione*

Languendo lungiamente in tal manera,
E non sapea ove trovar socorso,
Ché ‘l tempo fortunal che m’era corso
M’avea gittato d’ogne bona spera,
Allor tornò a me, che lungi m’era,
Ragion la bella, e disse: “Tu·sse’ corso,
Se·ttu non prendi i·me alcun ricorso,
Po’ che Fortuna è ‘nverso te sì fera.
Ed i’ ò tal vertù dal mi’ Segnore
Che mi criò, ch’i’ metto in buono stato
Chiunque al mi’ consiglio ferma il core;
E di Fortuna che·tt’à tormentato,
Se vuogli abandonar il Die d’Amore,
Tosto t’avrò co·llei pacificato”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXVI *L’Amante*

Quand’i’ udì’ Ragion che ‘l su’ consiglio
Mi dava buon e fin, sanza fallacie,
Dicendo di trovarmi acordo e pace
Con quella che m’avea messo ‘n asiglio,
I’ le dissi: “Ragion, vec[c]o ch’i’ piglio!
Ma non ch’i’ lasci il mi’ signor verace,
Ched i’ son su’ fedel, e sì mi piace
Tanto ch’i’ l’amo più che padre figlio.
Onde di ciò pensar non è mestero
Né tra no’ due tenerne parlamento,
Ché non sareb[b]e fatto di leg[g]iero
perciò ch’i’ falseria mi’ saramento.
Megli’amo di Fortuna es[s]er guer[r]ero
Ched i’ a·cciò avesse pensamento”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXVII *Ragione*

“Falsar tal saramento è san’ pec[c]ato,
Poi te’ ciascun, secondo Dicretale,
Che, se l’uon giura di far alcun male,
S’e’ se ne lascia, non è pergiurato.
Tu mi proposi che tu se’ giurato
A questo dio, che·tt’à condotto a tale
C[h]’ogne vivanda mangi sanza sale,
sì fortemente t’à disavorato.
E sì si fa chiamar il Die d’Amore:
Ma chi così l’apella fa gran torto,
Ché su’ sornome dritto sì è Dolore.
Or ti parti da·llui, o tu se’ morto,
Né no’l tener giamà’ più a signore,
E prendi il buon consiglio ch’i’ t’aporto”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXVIII *L’Amante*

“Ragion, tu sì mi vuo’ trar[e] d’amare
E di’ che questo mi’ signor è reo,
E ch’e’ non fu d’amor unquanche deo,
Ma di dolor, secondo il tu’ parlare.
Da·llui partir non credo ma’ pensare,
Né tal consiglio non vo’ creder eo,
Chéd egli è mi’ segnor ed i’ son seo
Fedel, sì è follia di ciò parlare.
Per ch’e’ mi par che ‘l tu’ consiglio sia
Fuor di tu’ nome troppo oltre misura,
Ché sanza amor nonn-è altro che nuìa.
Se Fortuna m’à tolto or mia ventura,
Ella torna la rota tuttavia,
E quell’è quel che molto m’asicura”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXIX *Ragione*

“Di trareti d’amar nonn-è mia ‘ntenza”,
Disse Ragion, “né da ciò non ti butto,
Ch’i’ vo’ ben che·ttu ami il mondo tutto,
Fermando in Gesocristo tu’ credenza.
E s’ad alcuna da’ tua benvoglienza,
Non vo’ che·ll’ami sol per lo didutto
Né per diletto, ma per trarne frutto,
Ché chi altro ne vuol cade in sentenza.
Ver è ch’egli à in quel[l]’opera diletto,
Che Natura vi mise per richiamo,
Per più sovente star con esse in letto:
Che se ciò non vi fos[s]e, ben sap[p]iamo
Che poca gente por[r]eb[b]e già petto
Al lavorio che cominciò Adamo”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XL *L’Amante*

I’ le dissi: “Ragion, or sie certana,
Po’ che Natura diletto vi mise,
In quel lavor, ched ella no’l v’asise
Già per niente, ché non è sì vana,
Ma per continuar la forma umana;
sì vuol ch’uon si diletti in tutte guise
Per volontier tornar a quelle asise,
Ché ‘n dilettando sua semenza grana.
Tu va’ dicendo ch’i’ no·mi diletti,
Mad i’ per me non posso già vedere
Che sanza dilettar uon vi s’asetti,
A quel lavor, per ch’io ferm’ò volere
Di dilettar col fior no·me ne getti.
Faccia Dio po’ del fiore su’ piacere!”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLI *Ragione*

“Del dilettar noi, vo’ chiti tua parte”,
Disse Ragion, “né che sie sanz’amanza,
Ma vo’ che prendi me per tua ‘ntendanza:
Che’ttu non troverai i·nulla parte
Di me più bella (e n’ag[g]ie mille carte),
Né che·tti doni più di dilettanza.
Degna sarei d’esser reina in Franza;
Sì fa’ follia, s’ tu mi getti a parte:
Ch’i’ ti farò più ric[c]o che Ric[c]hez[z]a,
Sanza pregiar mai rota di Fortuna,
Ch’ella ti possa mettere in distrez[z]a.
Se be·mi guardi, i·me nonn-à nes[s]una
Faz[z]on che non sia fior d’ogne bellez[z]a:
Più chiara son che nonn-è sol né luna”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLII *L’Amante*

“Ragion, tu sì mi fai larga proferta
Del tu’ amor e di te, ma i’ son dato
Del tutto al fior, il qual non fia cambiato
Per me ad altr’amor: di ciò sie certa.
Né non ti vo’ parlar sotto coverta:
Che s’i’ mi fosse al tutto a·tte gradato,
Certana sie ch’i’ ti verrè’ fallato,
Che ch’i’ dovesse aver, o prode o perta.
Allora avrè’ fallato a·llui e te,
E sì sarei provato traditore,
Ched i’ gli ò fatto saramento e fé.
Di questo fatto non far più sentore,
Ché ‘l Die d’Amor m’à·ssì legato a·ssé
Che·tte non pregio e lui tengo a signore”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLIII *Ragione*

“Amico, guarda s’ tu fai cortesia
Di scondir del tu’ amor tal damigella
Chente son io, che son sì chiara e bella
Che nulla falta i·me si troveria.
Nel mi’ visag[g]io l’uon si spec[c]hieria,
Sì non son troppo grossa né tro’ grella,
Né troppo grande né tro’ pic[c]iolella:
Gran gioia avrai se m’ài in tua balia.
Ched i’ sì·tti farò questo vantag[g]io,
Ch’i’ ti terrò tuttor in ricco stato,
Sanz’aver mai dolor nel tu’ corag[g]io.
E così tenni Socrato beato;
Ma mi credette e amò come sag[g]io,
Di che sarà di lui sempre parlato.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLIV *Ragione*

“Quel Socrato dond’i’ ti vo parlando,
Sì fu fontana piena di salute,
Della qual derivò ogne salute,
Po’ ched e’ fu del tutto al me’ comando.
Né mai Fortuna no’l gì tormentando:
Non pregiò sue levate né cadute;
Suo’ gioie e noie per lui fur ricevute,
Né ma’ su’ viso nonn-andò cambiando.
E bene e mal mettea in una bilanza
E tutto la facea igual pesare,
Sanza prenderne gioia né pesanza.
Per Dio, ched e’ ti piaccia riguardare
Al tu’ profitto, e prendim’ad amanza!
Più alto non ti puo’ tu imparentare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLV *Ragione*

“Ancor non vo’ t’incresca d’ascoltarmi:
Alquanti motti ch’i’ voglio ancor dire
A ritenere intendi e a udire,
Ché non potresti aprender miglior’ salmi.
Tu sì à’ cominciato a biasimarmi
Perch’i’ l’Amor ti volea far fug[g]ire,
Che fa le genti vivendo morire:
E tu ‘l saprai ancor se no·lo spalmi!
Sed i’ difendo a ciaschedun l’ebrez[z]a,
Non vo’ che ‘l ber per ciò nes[s]un disami,
Se non se quello che la gente blez[z]a.
I’ non difendo a·tte che·ttu non ami,
Ma non Amor che·tti tenga ‘n distrez[z]a,
E nella fin dolente te ne chiami”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLVI *L’Amante*

Quando Ragion fu assà’ dibattuta
E ch’ella fece capo al su’ sermone,
I’ sì·lle dissi: “Donna, tua lezione
Sie certa ch’ella m’è poco valuta,
Perciò ch’i’ no·ll’ò punto ritenuta,
Ché no·mi piace per nulla cagione;
Ma, cui piacesse, tal amonizione
Sì gli sareb[b]e ben per me renduta.
Chéd i’ so la lezion tratutta a mente
Pe·ripètall’a gente cu’ piacesse,
Ma già per me nonn-è savia niente:
Ché fermo son, se morir ne dovesse,
D’amar il fior, e ‘l me’ cor vi s’asente,
O ‘n altro danno ch’avenir potesse”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLVII *L’Amante e l’Amico*

Ragion si parte, quand’ella m’intese,
Sanza tener più meco parlamento,
Ché trovar non potea nullo argomento
Di trarmi de·laccio in ch’Amor mi prese.
Allor sì mi rimisi a le difese
Co’ mie’ pensieri, e fu’ i·mag[g]ior tormento
Assà’ ched i’ non fu’ al cominciamento:
No·mmi valea coverta di pavese.
Allor sì pia[c]que a Dio che ritornasse
Amico a me per darmi il su’ consiglio.
Sì tosto ch’e’ mi vide, a me sì trasse
E disse: “Amico, i’ sì mi maraviglio
Che ciascun giorno dimagre e apasse:
Dov’è il visag[g]io tu’ chiaro e vermiglio?”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLVIII *L’Amante*

Non ti maravigliar s’i’ non son grasso,
Amico, né vermiglio com’i’ soglio,
Ch’ogne contrario è presto a ciò ch’i’ voglio,
Così Fortuna m’à condotto al basso.
Ira e pensier m’ànno sì vinto e lasso
Ch’e’ non è maraviglia s’i’ mi doglio,
Chéd i’ sì vo a fedir a tale iscoglio,
S’Amor non ci provede, ch’i’ son casso.
E ciò m’à MalaBoc[c]a procacciato,
Che svegliò Castitate e Gelosia
Sì tosto com’i’ eb[b]i il fior basciato.
Allor fos[s]’egli stato i·Normandia,
Nel su’ paese ove fu strangolato,
Ché sì gli pia[c]que dir ribalderia!”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

IL *L’Amante e Amico*

Com’ era gito il fatto eb[b]i contato
A motto a motto, di filo in aguglia,
Al buono Amico, che non fu di Puglia;
Che m’eb[b]e molto tosto confortato,
E disse: “Guarda che n[on] sie ac[c]et[t]ato
Il consiglio Ragion, ma da te il buglia,
Ché ‘ fin’amanti tuttor gli tribuglia
Con quel sermon di che·tt’à sermonato.
Ma ferma in ben amar tutta tua ‘ntenza,
E guarda al Die d’Amor su’ [o]manag[g]io,
Ché tutto vince lungia soferenza.
Or metti a me intendere il corag[g]io,
Chéd i’ ti dirò tutta la sentenza
Di ciò che dé far fin amante sag[g]io.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

L *Amico* “A MalaBocca vo’ primieramente
Che·ttu sì no gli mostri mal sembiante;
Ma se gli passe o dimore davante,
Umile gli ti mostra ed ubidente.
Di te e del tuo gli sie largo offerente
E faccia di te come di su’ fante:
Così vo’ che lo ‘nganni, quel truante
Che si diletta in dir mal d’ogne gente.
Col braccio al collo sì die on menare
Il su’ nemico, insin che si’ al giubetto,
Co·le lusinghe, e po’ farlo impiccare.
Or metti ben il cuor a·cciò c[h]’ò detto:
Di costù’ ti convien così ovrare
Insin ch’e’ sia condotto al passo stretto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LI *Amico*

“Impresso vo’ che·ttu ag[g]ie astinenza
Di non andar sovente dal castello,
Né non mostrar che·tti sia guari bello
A riguardar là ov’è Bellacoglienza:
Ché·tti convien aver gran provedenza
Insin che MalaBoc[c]a t’è ribello,
Ché·ttu sa’ ben ch’egli è un mal tranello
Che giorno e notte grida e nogia [e] tenza.
De l’altre guardie non bisogna tanto
Guardar com’e’ ti fa di MalaBoc[c]a,
Ch’elle starian volontier da l’un canto;
Ma quel normando incontanente scoc[c]a
Ciò ched e’ sa, ed in piaz[z]a ed a santo,
E contruova di sé e mette in coc[c]a.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LII *Amico*

“La Vec[c]hia che Bellacoglienz’à ‘n guarda,
Servi ed onora a tutto tu’ podere:
Che s’ella vuol, troppo ti può valere,
Chéd ella nonn-è folle né musarda.
A Gelosia, che mal fuoco l’arda,
Fa ‘l somigliante, se·lla puo’ vedere:
Largo prometti a tutte de l’avere,
Ma ‘l pagamento il più che puo’ lo tarda.
E se·llor doni, dona gioeletti,
Be’ covriceffi e reti e ‘nt[r]ecciatoi
E belle ghirlanduz[z]e e ispil[l]etti
E pettini d’avorio e riz[z]atoi,
Coltelli e paternostri e tessutetti:
Ché questi non son doni strug[g]itoi.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LIII *Amico*

“Se non ài che donar, fa gran pro[m]essa
Sì com’i’ t’ò contato qui davanti,
Giurando loro Idio e tutti i santi,
Ed anche il sacramento della messa,
Che ciascuna farai gran baronessa,
Tanto darai lor fiorini e bisanti:
Di pianger vo’ che faccie gran semb[i]anti,
Dicendo che non puo’ viver sanz’essa.
E se·ttu non potessi lagrimare,
Fa che·ttu ag[g]ie sugo di cipolle
O di scalogni, e farànolti fare;
O di scialiva gli oc[c]hi tu·tte ‘molle,
S’ad altro tu non puo’ ricoverare.
E così vo’ che ciascheduna bolle.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LIV *Amico*

“Se·ttu non puo’ parlar a quella ch’ami,
Sì·lle manda per lettera tu’ stato,
Dicendo com’Amor t’à·ssì legato
Ver’ lei, che ma’ d’amarla non ti sfami.
E le’ dirai: “Per Gesocristo, tra’mi
D’esti pensier’, che m’ànno sì gravato!”;
Ma guarda che·llo scritto sia mandato
Per tal messag[g]io che non vi difami.
Ma nella lettera non metter nome;
Di lei dirai “colui”, di te “colei”:
Così convien cambiar le pere a pome.
Messag[g]io di garzon’ ma’ non farei,
Chéd e’ v’à gran periglio, ed odi come:
Nonn-à fermez[z]a in lor; perciò son rei.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LV *Amico*

“E se·lla donna prende tu’ presente,
Buon incomincio avrà’ di far mercato;
Ma·sse d’un bascio l’avessi inarrato,
Saresti poi certan del rimanente.
E s’ella a prender non è conoscente,
Anzi t’avrà del tutto rifusato,
Sembianti fa che sie forte crucciato,
E pàrtiti da·llei san’ dir niente.
E poi dimora un tempo san’ parlarne,
E non andar in luogo ov’ella sia,
E fa sembiante che nonn-ài che farne.
Ell’enterrà in sì gran malinconia
Che no·lle dimorrà sopr’osso carne;
Sì·ssi ripentirà di sua follia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LVI *Amico*

“Il marinaio che tuttor navicando
Va per lo mar, cercando terra istrana,
Con tutto si guid’e’ per tramontana,
Sì va e’ ben le sue vele cambiando
E per fug[g]ire da terra e apressando,
In quella guisa c[h]’allor gli è più sana:
Così governa mese e settimana
Insin che ‘l mar si va rabonacciando.
Così dé far chi d’Amor vuol gioire
Quand’e’ truova la sua donna diversa:
Un’or la dé cacciar, altra fug[g]ire.
Allor sì·lla vedrà palida e persa,
Ché sie certan che le parrà morire
Insin che no·lli cade sotto inversa.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LVII *Amico*

“Quando fai ad alcuna tua richesta,
O vec[c]hia ch’ella sia o giovanzella,
O maritata o vedova o pulzella,
Sì convien che·lla lingua tua sia presta
A·lle’ lodar suo’ oc[c]hi e bocca e testa
E dir che sotto ‘l ciel non à più bella:
“Piacesse a Dio ch’i’ v’avesse in gonella
Là ov’io diviserei, in mia podesta!”.
Così le’ déi del tutto andar lodando,
Chéd e’ nonn-è nes[s]una sì atempata
Ch’ella non si diletti in ascoltando,
E credes’esser più bella che fata;
E ‘mmantenente pensa a gir pelando
Colui che prima tanto l’à lodata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LVIII *Amico*

“Le giovane e le vec[c]hie e le mez[z]ane
Son tutte quante a prender sì ‘ncarnate
Che nessun puote aver di lor derate
Per cortesia, tanto son villane:
Ché quelle che si mostran più umane
E non prendenti, dànno le ghignate.
Natur’è quella che·lle v’à ‘fetate,
Sì com’ell’à ‘fetato a caccia il cane.
Ver è c[h]’alcuna si mette a donare;
Ma ella s’è ben prima proveduta
Ch’ella ‘l darà in luogo d’adoppiare.
I·llor gioei non son di gran valuta,
Ma e’ son esca per uccè’ pigliare.
Guardisi ben chi à corta veduta!

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LIX *Amico*

“Se quella cu’ richiedi ti rifiuta,
Tu sì non perdi nulla in su’ scondetto,
Se non se solo il motto che·ll’ài detto:
Dello scondir sarà tosto pentuta.
Una nel cento non fu mai veduta
(Ed ancor più, che ‘l miglià’ ci ti metto)
Femina cu’ piacesse tal disdetto,
Come ch’ella t’asalga di venuta.
Richiè’, c[h]’almen n’avrà’ su’ ben volere,
Con tutto ti vad’ella folleg[g]iando,
Ché·ttu no·le puo’ far mag[g]ior piacere.
Ma di ciò non dé gir nessun parlando
Se ‘n averla non mette su’ podere,
Chéd ella se ne va dapoi vantando.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LX *Amico*

“E quando tu·ssarai co·llei soletto,
Prendila tra·lle braccia e fa ‘l sicuro,
Mostrando allor se·ttu·sse’ forte e duro,
E ‘mantenente le metti il gambetto.
Né no·lla respittar già per su’ detto:
S’ella chiede merzé, cheg[g]ala al muro.
Tu·lle dirai: “Madonna, i’ m’assicuro
A questo far, c[h]’Amor m’à·ssì distretto
Di vo’, ched i’ non posso aver sog[g]iorno;
Per ch’e’ convien che vo’ ag[g]iate merzede
Di me, che tanto vi son ito intorno;
Ché·ssiate certa ched i’ v’amo a fede,
Né d’amar voi giamai no·mmi ritorno,
Ché per voi il me’ cor salvar si crede”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXI *Amico*

“E se·ttu ami donna ferma e sag[g]ia,
Ben sag[g]iamente e fermo ti contieni,
C[h]’avanti ch’ella dica: “Amico, tieni
Delle mie gioie”, più volte t’asag[g]ia.
E se·ttu ami femina volaggia,
Volag[g]iamente davanti le vieni
E tutt’a la sua guisa ti mantieni;
Od ella ti terrà bestia salvaggia,
E crederà che·ttu sie un papalardo,
Che sie venuto a·llei per inganarla:
Chéd ella il vol pur giovane e gagliardo.
La buona e·ssaggia ma’ di ciò non parla,
Anz’ama più l’uon fermo che codardo,
Ché non dotta che que’ faccia blasmarla.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXII *Amico*

“Ancor convien che·ttu sacci’ alcun’arte
Per governar e te e la tu’ amica:
Di buon’ morsei tuttor la mi notrica,
E dàlle tuttavia la miglior parte.
E s’ella vuol andar i·nulla parte,
Sì·lle dì: “Va, che Dio ti benedica”;
In gastigarla non durar fatica,
Sed al su’ amor non vuo’ tagliar le carte.
E se·lla truovi l’opera faccendo,
Non far sembiante d’averla veduta:
In altra parte te ne va fug[g]endo.
E se·lle fosse lettera venuta,
Non t’intrametter d’andar incheg[g]endo
Chi·ll’à recata né chi la saluta.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXIII *Amico*

“S’a scac[c]hi o vero a·ttavole giocassi
Colla tua donna, fa ch’ag[g]ie il pig[g]iore
Del gioco, e dille ch’ell’è la migliore
Dadigittante che·ttu mai trovassi.
S’a coderon giocaste, pigna ambassi,
E fa ched ella sia là vincitore:
Della tua perdita non far sentore,
Ma che cortesemente la ti passi.
Falla seder ad alti, e·ttu sie basso,
E sì·ll’aporta carello o cuscino:
Di le’ servir non ti veg[g]hi mai lasso.
S’adosso le vedessi un buscolino,
Fa che glie·levi, e se vedessi sasso
Là ‘v’ella dé passar, netta ‘l camino

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXIV *Amico*

“A sua maniera ti mantien tuttora:
Che s’ella ride, ridi, o balla, balla;
O s’ella piange, pensa a consolalla,
Ma fa che pianghe tu sanza dimora.
E se con altre don[n]e fosse ancora
Che giocas[s]ero al gioco della palla,
S’andasse lungi, corri ad aportalla:
A·lle’ servir tuttor pensa e lavora.
E se vien alcun’or ch’ella ti tenza,
Ch’ella ti crucci sì che·ttu le dài,
Imantenente torna ad ubidenza;
E giurale che ma’ più no’l farai;
Di quel ch’ài fatto farai penitenza;
Prendila e falle il fatto che·tti sai.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXV *Amico*

“Sovr’ogne cosa pensa di lusinghe,
Lodando sua maniera e sua faz[z]one,
E che di senno passa Salamone:
Con questi motti vo’ che·lla dipinghe.
Ma guarda non s’aveg[g]a che·tt’infinghe,
Ché non v’andresti mai a processione;
Non ti var[r]eb[b]e lo star ginoc[c]hione:
Però quel lusingar fa che tu ‘l tinghe.
Chéd e’ n’è ben alcuna sì viziata
Che non crede già mai ta’ favolelle,
Perc[h]’altra volta n’è stata beffata;
Ma queste giovanette damigelle,
Cu’ la lor terra nonn-è stata arata,
Ti crederanno ben cotà’ novelle.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXVI *Amico*

“Se·ttu ài altra amica procacciata,
O ver che·ttu la guardi a procac[c]iare,
E sì non vuo’ per ciò abandonare
La prima cu’ à’ lungo tempo amata,
Se·ttu a la novella à’ gioia donata,
Sì dì ch’ella la guardi di recare
In luogo ove la prima ravisare
No·lla potesse, ché seria smembrata.
O s’ella ancor ne fosse in sospez[z]one,
Fa saramenta ch’ella t’ag[g]ia torto,
C[h]’unque ver’ lei non fosti i·mesprigione;
E s’ella il pruova, convien che sie acorto
A dir che forza fu e tradigione:
Allor la prendi e sì·lle ‘nnaffia l’orto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXVII *Amico*

“E se·ttua donna cade i·mmalatia,
Sì pensa che·lla faccie ben servire,
Né·ttu da·llei giamai non ti partire;
Dàlle vivanda c[h]’a piacer le sia;
E po’ sì·lle dirai: “Anima mia,
Istanotte ti tenni i·mmio dormire
intra·lle braccia, sana, al me’ disire:
Molto mi fece Idio gran cortesia,
Che mi mostrò sì dolze avisione”.
Po’ dica, ch’ella l’oda, come sag[g]io,
Che per lei farà’ far gran processione,
O·ttu n’andrà’ in lontan pellegrinag[g]io,
Se Gesocristo le dà guerigione.
Così avrai il su’ amor e ‘l su’ corag[g]io”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXVIII *L’Amante e Amico*

Quand’eb[b]i inteso Amico che leale
Consiglio mi d[on]ava a su’ podere,
I’ sì·lli dissi: “Amico, il mi’ volere
Non fu unquanche d’esser disleale;
Né piaccia a Dio ch’i’ sia condotto a tale
Ch’i’ a le genti mostri benvolere
E servali del corpo e dell’avere,
Ch[ed] i’ pensas[s]e poi di far lor male.
Ma sòffera ch’i’ avante disfidi
E MalaBocca e tutta sua masnada,
Sì che neuno i·mme giamai si fidi;
Po’ penserò di metterli a la spada”.
Que’ mi rispuose: “Amico, mal ti guidi.
Cotesta sì nonn-è la dritta strada.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXIX *Amico*

“A te sì non convien far disfidaglia,
Se·ttu vuo’ ben civir di questa guerra:
Lasciala far a’ gran’ signor’ di terra,
Che posson sof[f]erir oste e battaglia.
MalaBocca, che così ti travaglia,
E traditor: chi ‘l tradisce non erra;
Chi con falsi sembianti no·ll’aferra,
il su’ buon gioco mette a ripentaglia.
Se·ttu lo sfidi o batti, e’ griderà,
Chéd egli è di natura di mastino:
Chi più ‘l minaccia, più gli abaierà.
Chi MalaBocca vuol metter al chino,
Sed egli è sag[g]io, egli lusingherà:
Ché certo sie, quell’è ‘l dritto camino”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXX *L’Amante e Amico*

“Po’ mi convien ovrar di tradigione
E a·tte pare, Amico, ch’i’ la faccia,
I’ la farò, come ch’ella mi spiaccia,
Per venir al di su di quel cagnone.
Ma sì·tti priego, gentil compagnone,
Se·ssai alcuna via che·ssia più avaccia
Per MalaBocca e’ suo’ metter in caccia
E trar Bellacoglienza di pregione,
Che·ttu sì·lla mi insegni, ed i’ v’andrò
E menerò comeco tal aiuto
Ched i’ quella fortez[z]a abatterò”.
“E’ nonn-à guari ch’i’ ne son venuto”,
Rispuose Amico, “ma ‘l ver ti dirò,
Che·ss’i’ v’andai, i’ me ne son pentuto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXI *Amico*

“L’uom’apella il camin TroppoDonare;
E’ fu fondato per FolleLarghez[z]a;
L’entrata guarda madonna Ric[c]hez[z]a,
Che non i lascia nessun uon passare,
S’e’ nonn-è su’ parente o su’ compare:
Già tanto nonn-avreb[b]e in sé bellez[z]a,
Cortesia né saver né gentilez[z]a,
Ched ella gli degnasse pur parlare.
Se puo’ per quel camin trovar passag[g]io,
Tu·ssì abatterà’ tosto il castello,
Bellacoglienza trarà’ di servag[g]io.
Non vi varrà gittar di manganello,
Néd a le guardie lor folle musag[g]io,
Porte né mura, né trar di quadrello.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXII *Amico*

“Or sì·tt’ò detto tutta la sentenza
Di ciò che·ssag[g]io amante far dovria:
Così l’amor di lor guadagneria,
Sanz’aver mai tra·llor malivoglienza.
Se mai trai di pregion Bellacoglienza,
Sì fa che·ttu ne tenghi questa via,
Od altrimenti mai non t’ameria,
Che ch’ella ti mostrasse in aparenza.
E dàlle spazio di poter andare
Colà dove le piace per la villa;
Pena perduta seria in le’ guardare:
Ché·ttu ter[r]esti più tosto un’anguilla
Ben viva per la coda, e fossi i·mmare,
Che non faresti femina che ghilla”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXIII *L’Amante*

Così mi confortò il buon Amico,
Po’ si partì da me sanza più dire;
Allor mi comincià’ fort’a gechire
Ver’ MalaBocca, il mi’ crudel nemico.
Lo Schifo i’ sì pregiava men ch’un fico,
Ch’egli avea gran talento di dormire;
Vergogna si volea ben sofferire
Di guer[r]eg[g]iarmi, per certo vi dico.
Ma e’ v’era Paura, la dottosa,
C[h]’udendomi parlar tutta tremava:
Quella nonn-era punto dormigliosa;
In ben guardar il fior molto pensava;
Vie più che·ll’altre guardi’era curiosa,
Perciò che ben in lor non si fidava.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXIV *L’Amante*

Intorno dal castello andai cercando
Sed i’ potesse trovar quel[l]’entrata
La qual FolleLarghez[z]a avea fondata,
Per avacciar ciò che giva pensando.
Allor guardai, e sì vidi ombreando
Di sotto un pin una donna pregiata,
Sì nobilmente vestita e parata
Che tutto ‘l mondo gia di lei parlando.
E sì avea in sé tanta bel[l]ez[z]a
Che tutto intorno lei aluminava
Col su’ visag[g]io, tanto avea chiarez[z]a;
Ed un suo amico co·llei si posava.
La donna sì avea nome Ric[c]hez[z]a,
Ma·llui non so com’altri l’apellava.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXV *L’Amante e Ric[c]hez[z]a*

Col capo inchin la donna salutai,
E sì·lla cominciai a domandare
Del camin c[h]’uomo apella TroppoDare.
Quella rispose: “Già per me no’l sai;
E se ‘l sapessi, già non vi ‘nterrai,
Chéd i’ difendo a ciaschedun l’entrare
Sed e’ nonn-à che spender e che dare,
Sì farai gran saver se·tte ne vai:
C[h]’unquanche non volesti mi’ acontanza,
Né mi pregiasti mai a la tua vita.
Ma or ne prenderò buona vengianza:
Ché sie certano, se·ttu m’ài schernita,
i’ ti darò tormento e malenanza,
Sì ch’e’ me’ ti var[r]ia avermi servita”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXVI *L’Amante e Ric[c]hez[z]a*

“Per Dio, gentil madonna, e per merzede”,
Le’ dissi allor, “s’i’ ò ver’ voi fallato,
Ched e’ vi piaccia ched e’ sia amendato
Per me, chéd i’ ‘l farò a buona fede:
Ch’i’ son certan che ‘l vostro cuor non crede
Com’io dentro dal mio ne son crucciato;
Ma quando vo’ m’avrete ben provato,
E’ sarà certo di ciò c[h]’or non vede.
Per ch’i’ vi priego che mi diate il passo,
Ched i’ potesse abatter il castello
Di Gelosia, che m’à sì messo al basso”.
Quella mi disse: “Tu se’ mio ribello;
Per altra via andrai, ché sarà’ lasso
Innanzi che n’abatti un sol crinello”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXVII *L’Amante e Dio d’Amore*

Già no·mi valse nessuna preghera
Ched i’ verso Ric[c]hez[z]a far potesse,
Ché poco parve che le ne calesse,
Sì la trovai ver’ me crudel e fera.
Lo Dio d’Amor, che guar’ lungi no·mm’era,
Mi riguardò com’io mi contenesse,
E parvemi ched e’ gli ne increscesse;
Sì venne a me e disse: “In che manera,
Amico, m’ài guardato l’omanag[g]io
Che mi facesti, passat’à un anno?”.
I’ gli dissi: “Messer, vo’ avete il gag[g]io
Or, ch’è il core”. “E’ non ti fia già danno,
Ché tu·tti se’ portato come sag[g]io,
Sì avrai guiderdon del grande afanno”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXVIII *L’Amante*

Lo Dio d’Amor per tutto ‘l regno manda
Messag[g]i e lettere a la baronia:
Che davanti da lui ciaschedun sia,
Ad alcun priega e ad alcun comanda;
E ch’e’ vorrà far lor una domanda
La qual fornita converrà che·ssia:
D’abatter il castel di Gelosia,
Sì ch’e’ non vi dimori inn-uscio banda.
Al giorno ciaschedun si presentò,
Presto di far il su’ comandamento:
Dell’armadure ciaschedun pensò,
Per dar a Gelosia pene e tormento.
La baronia i’ sì vi nomerò
Secondo ched i’ ò rimembramento.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXIX *La baronia d’Amore*

Madonna Oziosa venne la primiera
Con NobiltàdiCuor e con Ric[c]hezza:
Franchigia, Cortesia, Pietà, Larghez[z]a,
Ardimento e Onor, ciaschedun v’era.
Diletto e Compagnia seguian la schiera;
Angelicanza, Sicurtà e Letezza
E Solaz[z]o e Bieltate e Giovanez[z]a
Andavan tutte impresso la bandera.
Ancor v’era Umiltate e Pacienza;
Giolività vi fue e BenCelare
E Falsembiante e CostrettaAstinenza.
Amor si cominciò a maravigliare
Po’ vide Falsembiante in sua presenza,
E disse: “Chi·ll’à tolto a sicurare?”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXX *CostrettaAstinenza*

AstinenzaCostretta venne avanti,
E disse: “E’ vien comeco in compagnia,
Ché sanza lui civir no·mmi poria,
Tanto non pregherei né Die né ‘ santi;
E me e sé governa co’ sembianti
Che gli ‘nsegnò sua madre Ipocresia.
I’ porto il manto di papalardia
Per più tosto venir a tempo a’ guanti.
E così tra noi due ci governiamo
E nostra vita dimeniàn gioiosa,
Sanza dir cosa mai che noi pensiamo.
La ciera nostra par molto pietosa,
Ma nonn-è mal nes[s]un che non pensiamo,
Ben paià·noi gente relegiosa”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXI *Dio d’Amor e Falsembiante*

Lo Dio d’Amor sor[r]ise, quando udìo
AstinenzaCostretta sì parlare,
E disse: “Qui à gente d’alt’affare!
Dì, Falsembiante, se·tt’aiuti Idio,
S’i’ ti ritegno del consiglio mio,
Mi potrò io in te punto fidare?”.
“Segnor mio sì, di nulla non dottare,
Ch’altro c[h]’a lealtà ma’ non pens’io”.
“Dunqu’è cotesto contra tua natura”.
“Veracemente ciò è veritate,
Ma tuttor vi met[t]ete in aventura!
Mai i·lupo di sua pelle non gittate,
No·gli farete tanto di laidura,
Se voi imprima no·llo scorticate”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXII *Dio d’Amore*

Amor disse a’ baroni: “I’ v’ò mandato
Perch’e’ convien ch’i’ ag[g]ia il vostro aiuto,
Tanto che quel castel si’ abattuto
Che Gelosia di nuovo à già fondato.
Onde ciascun di voi è mi’ giurato:
Sì vi richeg[g]io che sia proveduto
Per voi in tal maniera che tenuto
Non sia più contra me, ma si’ aterrato.
Ch’e’ pur convien ch’i’ soccorra Durante,
Chéd i’ gli vo’ tener sua promessione,
Ché trop[p]o l’ò trovato fin amante.
Molto penò di tòr[r]elmi Ragione:
Que’ come sag[g]io fu sì fermo e stante
Che no·lle valse nulla su’ sermone”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXIII *Il consiglio della baronia*

La baronia sì fece parlamento
Per devisar in che maniera andranno
O la qual porta prima assaliranno;
Sì fur ben tutti d’un acordamento,
Fuor che Ric[c]hez[z]a, che fe’ saramento
Ch’ella non prendereb[b]e per me affanno,
Néd al castel non dareb[b]e già danno
Per pregheria né per comandamento
Che nessuna persona far potesse,
Perciò ch’i’ non volli anche sua contezza:
Sì era dritto ch’i’ me ne pentesse.
Ben disse ch’i’ le feci gran carezza
Sotto dal pin, ma non c[h]’ancor vedesse
Che Povertà no·m’avesse in distrezza.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXIV *L’ordinanze delle battaglie de la baronia*

Al Die d’Amor ricordaro il fatto,
E disser ch’e’ trovavar d’acordanza
Che Falsembiante e CostrettaAstinanza
Dessono a MalaBocca scacco matto;
Larghez[z]a e Cortesia traes[s]er patto
Con quella che·ssa ben la vec[c]hia danza,
E Pietate e Franchez[z]a dear miccianza
A quello Schifo che sta sì ‘norsato;
E po’ vada Diletto e BenCelare,
Ed a Vergogna dean tal lastrellata
Ched ella non si possa rilevare;
Ardimento a Paura dea ghignata,
E Sicurtà la deg[g]ia sì pelare
Ched ella non vi sia ma’ più trovata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXV *Lo Dio d’Amore*

Amor rispuose: “A me sì piace assai
Che l’oste avete bene istabulita;
Ma·ttu, Ric[c]hez[z]a, c[h]’or mi se’ fallita,
Sed i’ potrò, tutte ne penterai.
S’uomini ric[c]hi i’ posso tener mai,
Non poss’io già star un giorno in vita,
S’avanti che da me facciar partita
Non recherò a poco il loro assai.
Uomini pover’ fatt’ànno lor sire
Di me, e ciaschedun m’à dato il core:
Per ch’a tal don mi deg[g]io ben sofrire.
Se di ric[c]hez[z]a sì come d’amore
I’ fosse dio, non possa io ben sentire
Sed i’ no·gli mettesse in gran riccore”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXVI *La risposta de la baronia*

“S’uomini ric[c]hi vi fanno damag[g]io,
Vo’ avete ben chi ne farà vendetta:
Non fate forza s’ella non s’afretta,
Ché no’ la pagherén ben de l’oltrag[g]io.
Le donne e le pulzelle al chiar visag[g]io
Gli metteranno ancor a tal distretta,
Ma’ che ciascuna largo si prometta,
Che strutto ne sarà que’ ch’è ‘l più sag[g]io.
Ma Falsembiante trametter non s’osa
Di questi fatti, né sua compagnia,
Ché gra·mmal gli volete: ciò ci posa.
Sì vi priega tutta la baronia
Che·riceviate, e [a]menderà la cosa”.
“Da po’ che vo’ volete, e così sia”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXVII *Amore*

Amor sì disse: “Per cotal convento,
FalsoSembiante, i·mmia corte enter[r]ai,
Che tutti i nostri amici avanzerai
E metterai i nemici in bassamento.
E sì·tti do per buon cominciamento
Che re de’ barattier’ tu sì sarai:
Ché pez[z]’à che ‘n capitolo il fermai,
Ch’i’ conoscea ben tu’ tradimento.
Or sì vo’ che·cci dichi in audienza,
Pe·ritrovarti se n’avrén mestiere,
I·luogo dove tu·ffai residenza,
Né di che servi, né di che mestiere.
Fa che n’ag[g]iàn verace conoscenza;
Ma no’l farai, sì·sse’ mal barattiere”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXVIII *Falsembiante*

“Po’ ch’e’ vi piace, ed i’ sì ‘l vi diròe”,
Diss’alor Falsembiante: “or ascoltate,
Chéd i’ sì vi dirò la veritate
De·luogo dov’io uso e dov’i’ stoe.
Alcuna volta per lo secol voe,
Ma dentro a’ chiostri fug[g]o in salvitate,
Ché quivi poss’io dar le gran ghignate
E tuttor santo tenuto saròe.
Il fatto a’ secolari è troppo aperto:
Lo star guari co·lor no·mmi bisogna,
C[h]’a me convien giucar troppo coperto.
Perch’i’ la mia malizia mi ripogna,
Vest’io la roba del buon frate Alberto:
Chi tal rob’àe, non teme mai vergogna.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXIX *Falsembiante*

“I’ sì mi sto con que’ religiosi,
Religiosi no, se non in vista,
Che·ffan la ciera lor pensosa e trista
Per parer a le genti più pietosi;
E sì si mostran molto sofrettosi
E ‘n tapinando ciaschedun a[c]quista:
Sì che perciò mi piace lor amista,
C[h]’a barattar son tutti curiosi.
Po’ vanno procacciando l’acontanze
Di ric[c]he genti, e van[n]ole seguendo,
E sì voglion mangiar le gran pietanze,
E’ preziosi vin’ vanno bevendo:
E queste son le lor grandi astinanze;
Po’ van la povertà altrui abellendo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XC *Falsembiante*

“E’ sì vanno lodando la poverta,
E le ric[c]hez[z]e pescan co’ tramagli,
Ed ivi mettor tutti lor travagli,
Tutto si cuoprar e’ d’altra coverta.
Di lor non puo’ tu trare cosa certa:
Se·ttu lor presti, me’ val a chitarli;
Che se·ttu metti pena in ra[c]quistarli,
Ciascun di lor si ferma in darti perta.
E ciascun dice ch’è religioso
Perché vesta di sopra grossa lana,
E ‘l morbido bianchetto tien nascoso;
Ma già religione ivi non grana,
Ma grana nel cuor umile e piatoso
Che ‘n trar sua vita mette pena e ana.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCI *Falsembiante*

“Com’i’ v’ò detto, in cuore umile e piano
Santa religion grana e fiorisce:
Religioso non si inorgoglisce;
Tuttora il truova l’uon dolce e umano.
A cotal gente i’ sì do tosto mano,
Ché vita di nessun no·mm’abelisce
Se non inganna e baratta e tradisce;
Ma ‘l più ch’i’ posso, di lor sì mi strano,
Ché con tal gente star ben non potrei;
C[h]’a voi, gentil signor, ben dire l’oso,
Che s’i’ vi stes[s]e, i’ sì mi ‘nfignirei.
E però il mi’ volere i’ sì vi chioso,
Che pender prima i’ sì mi lascierei
Ched i’ uscisse fuor di mi’ proposo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCII *Fa[l]sembiante*

“Color con cui sto si ànno il mondo
Sotto da lor sì forte aviluppato,
Ched e’ nonn-è nes[s]un sì gran prelato
C[h]’a lor possanza truovi riva o fondo.
Co·mmio baratto ciaschedun afondo:
Che sed e’ vien alcun gra·litterato
Che voglia discovrir il mi’ peccato,
Co·la forza ch’i’ ò, i’ sì ‘l confondo.
Mastro Sighier non andò guari lieto:
A ghiado il fe’ morire a gran dolore
Nella corte di Roma, ad Orbivieto.
Mastro Guiglielmo, il buon di Sant’Amore,
Fec’i’ di Francia metter in divieto
E sbandir del reame a gran romore.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCIII *FalsoSembiante*

“I’ sì vo per lo mondo predicando
E dimostrando di far vita onesta;
Ogne mi’ fatto sì vo’ far a sesta,
E gli altrui penso andar aviluppando.
Ma chi venisse il fatto riguardando,
Ed egli avesse alquanto sale in testa,
Veder potreb[b]e in che ‘l fatto si ne-sta,
Ma no’l consiglierè’ andarne parlando.
Ché que’ che dice cosa che mi spiaccia,
O vero a que’ che seguor mi’ penone,
E’ convien che·ssia morto o messo in caccia,
Sanza trovar in noi mai ridenzione
Né per merzé né per cosa ch’e’ faccia:
E’ pur convien ch’e’ vada a distruzione”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCIV *Dio d’Amore e Falsembiante*

Come FalsoSembiante sì parlava,
Amor sì ‘l prese allora ãragionare,
E dis[s]egli, in rompendo su’ parlare,
C[h]’al su’ parer ver’ Dio troppo fallava.
E poi il domandò se l’uon trovava
Religione in gente seculare.
Que’ disse: “Sì, nonn-è mestier dottare
“Che più che ‘n altro luogo ivi fruttava;
Chéd e’ sareb[b]e troppo gran dolore
Se ciaschedun su’ anima perdesse
Perché vestisse drappo di colore.
Né lui né altri già ciò non credesse”:
Ché ‘n ogne roba porta frutto e fiore
Religion, ma’ che ‘l cuor le si desse.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCV *Falsembiante*

“Molti buon’ santi à l’uon visti morire
E molte buone sante gloriose,
Che fuor divote e ben religiose
E robe di color’ volean vestire:
Né non lasciãr perciò già di santire;
Ma elle non fur anche dispittose,
Anz’eran caritevoli e pietose
E sofferian per Dio d’esser martìre.
E s’i’ volesse, i’ n’andrè’ assà’ nomando;
Ma apressoché tutte le sante e’ santi
Che·ll’uon va per lo mondo og[g]i adorando,
Ten[n]er famiglie, e sì fecer anfanti;
Vergine e caste donne gîr portando
Cotte e sorcotti di colori e manti.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCVI *Falsembiante*

“L’undicimilia vergini beate
Che davanti da Dio fanno lumera,
In roba di color ciaschedun’era
Il giorno ch’elle fur martoriate:
Non ne fur per ciò da Dio schifate.
Dunque chi dice che·ll’anima pèra
Per roba di color, già ciò non chera,
Ché già non fiar per ciò di men salvate:
Ché ‘l salvamento vien del buon corag[g]io;
La roba non vi to’ né non vi dona.
E questo sì dé creder ogne sag[g]io,
Che non sia intendimento di persona
Che que’ che veste l’abito salvag[g]io
Si salvi, se nonn-à l’opera bona.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCVII *Falsembiante*

“Chi della pelle del monton fasciasse
I·lupo, e tra·lle pecore il mettesse,
Credete voi, perché monton paresse,
Che de le pecore e’ non divorasse?
Già men lor sangue non desiderasse,
Ma vie più tosto inganar le potesse;
Po’ che·lla pecora no’l conoscesse,
Se si fug[g]isse, impresso lui n’andasse.
Così vo io mi’ abito divisando
Ched i’ per lupo non sia conosciuto,
Tutto vad’io le genti divorando;
E, Dio merzé, i’ son sì proveduto
Ched i’ vo tutto ‘l mondo og[g]i truffando,
E sì son santo e produomo tenuto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCVIII *Falsembiante*

“Sed e’ ci à guari di cota’ lupelli,
La Santa Chiesa sì è malbalita,
Po’ che·lla sua città è asalita
Per questi apostoli, c[h]’or son, novelli:
Ch’i’ son certan, po’ ch’e’ son suo’ rubelli,
Ch’ella non potrà essere guarentita;
Presa sarà sanza darvi fedita
Né di traboc[c]hi né di manganelli.
Se Dio non vi vuol metter argomento,
La guer[r]a sì fie tosto capitata,
Sì ch’ogne cosa andrà a perdimento:
Ed a me par ch’E’ l’à dimenticata,
Po’ sòfera cotanto tradimento
Da color a cui guardia l’à lasciata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

IC *Falsembiante*

“Sed e’ vi piace, i’ sì m’andrò posando
Sanza di questi fatti più parlare;
Ma tuttor sì vi vo’ convenenzare
Che tutti i vostri amici andrò avanzando,
Ma’ che comeco ciascun vada usando;
Sì son e’ morti se no’l voglion fare;
E la mia amica convien onorare,
O ‘l fatto loro andrà pur peg[g]iorando.
Egli è ben ver ched i’ son traditore,
E per ladron m’à Dio pezz’à giug[g]iato,
Perch’i’ ò messo il mondo in tanto er[r]ore.
Per molte volte mi son pergiurato;
Ma i’ fo il fatto mio sanza romore,
Sì che nessun se n’è ancora adato.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

C *Falsembiante*

“I’ fo sì fintamente ogne mio fatto
Che Proteus[so], che già si solea
Mutare in tutto ciò ched e’ volea,
Non sep[p]e unquanche il quarto di baratto
Come fo io, che non tenni ancor patto,
E nonn-è ancor nessun che se n’adea,
Tanto non stea commeco o mangi o bea
Che nella fine no·gli faccia un tratto.
Chéd i’ so mia faz[z]on sì ben cambiare
Ched i’ non fui unquanche conosciuto
In luogo, tanto vi potesse usare:
Ché chi mi crede più aver veduto,
Cogli atti miei gli so gli oc[c]hi fasciare,
Sì ch’e’ m’à incontanente isconosciuto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CI *Falsembiante*

“I’ sì so ben per cuor ogne linguag[g]io;
Le vite d’esto mondo i’ ò provate:
Ch’un’or divento prete, un’altra frate,
Or prinze, or cavaliere, or fante, or pag[g]io,
Secondo ched i’ veg[g]io mi’ vantag[g]io;
Un’altr’or son prelato, un’altra abate;
Molto mi piaccion gente regolate,
Ché co·llor cuopr’i’ meglio il mi’ volpag[g]io.
Ancor mi fo romito e pellegrino,
Cherico e avocato e g[i]ustiziere
E monaco e calonaco e bighino;
E castellan mi fo e forestiere,
E giovane alcun’ora e vec[c]hio chino:
A brieve mott’i’ son d’ogni mestiere.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CII *Falsembiante*

“Sì prendo poi, per seguir mia compagna,
Cioè madon[n]a CostrettaAstinenza,
Altri dighisamenti a sua vogl[i]enza,
Perch’ella mi sollaz[z]a e m’acompagna;
E metto pena perch’ella rimagna
Comeco, perch’ell’è di gran sofrenza
E s[ì] amostra a·ttal gran benvoglienza
Ch’ella vor[r]eb[b]e che fosse in Ispagna.
Ella si fa pinzochera e badessa
E monaca e rinchiusa e serviziale,
E fassi sopriora e prioressa.
Idio sa ben sed ell’è spiritale!
Altr’or si fa noviz[z]a, altr’or professa;
Ma, che che faccia, non pensa c[h]’a male.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIII *Falsembiante*

“Ancor sì no·mi par nulla travaglia
Gir per lo mondo inn-ogne regione
E ricercar ogne religione;
Ma della religion, sa·nulla faglia,
I’ lascio il grano e prendone la paglia,
Ch’i’ non vo’ che·ll’abito a lor faz[z]one
E predicar dolze predicazione:
Con questi due argomenti il mondo abaglia.
Così vo io mutando e suono e verso
E dicendo parole umili e piane,
Ma molt’è il fatto mio a·dir diverso:
Ché tutti que’ c[h]’og[g]i manùcar pane
No·mi ter[r]ian ch’i’ non gisse traverso,
Ch’i’ ne son ghiotto più che d’unto il cane”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIV *Amore e Falsembiante*

FalsoSembiante si volle sofrire
Sanza dir de’ suo’ fatti più in avante,
Ma ‘l Die d’Amor non fece pa sembiante
Ched e’ fosse anoiato dell’udire,
Anzi gli disse per lui ringioire:
“E’ convien al postutto, Falsembiante,
C[h]’ogne tua tradigion tu sì·cci cante,
Sì che non vi rimanga nulla a dire,
Ché·ttu mi pari un uon di Gesocristo
E ‘l portamento fai di santo ermito”.
“Egli è ben vero, ma i’ sono ipocristo”.
“Predicar astinenza i’ t’ò udito”.
“Ver è, ma, per ch’i’ faccia il viso tristo,
I’ son di buon’ morsei dentro farsito.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CV *Falsembiante*

“Di buon’ morselli i’ sì m’empio la pancia,
E, se si truova al mondo di buon vino,
E’ convien ch’i’ me ne empia lo bolino;
Ad agio vo’ star più che ‘l re di Francia:
Ché gli altrù’ fatti so’ tutti una ciancia
Verso de’ mie’, che son mastro divino
E le cose sacrete m’indovino
E tutto ‘l mondo peso a mia bilancia.
Ancor vo’ da le genti tal vantag[g]io,
Ch’i’ vo’ riprender sanz’esser ripreso:
Ed è ben dritto, ch’i’ sono ‘l più sag[g]io;
Sì porto tuttor, sotto, l’arco teso,
Per dar a quel cotal male e damag[g]io
Che ‘n gastigarm[i] stesse punto inteso”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CVI *Amore e Falsembiante*

“Tu sì va’ predicando povertate
E lodila”. “Ver è, ad uopo altrui,
Ch’i’ non son già su’ amico, né ma’ fui,
Anzi le porto crudel nimistate:
Ch’i’ amerei assà’ meglio l’amistate
Del re di Francia che quella a colui
Che va caendo per l’uscial altrui
E muor sovente di necessitate.
E ben avess’egli anima di santo,
Il pover, no·mi piace sua contez[z]a,
E più ch’i’ posso il metto da l’un canto;
E sed amor gli mostro, sì è fintez[z]a.
Ma convien ch’i’ mi cuopra di quel manto:
Per mostrar ch’i’ sia buon, lor fo carez[z]a.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CVII *Falsembiante*

“E quand’io veg[g]o ignudi que’ truanti
Su’ monti del litame star tremando,
Che fredo e fame gli va sì acorando
Ch’e’ non posson pregar né Die né ‘ santi,
E ‘l più ch’i’ posso lor fug[g]o davanti,
Sanza girne nessun riconfortando,
Anzi lor dico: “Al diavol v’acomando
Con tutti que’ che non àn de’ bisanti”.
Ché·lla lor compressione è freda e secca,
Sì ch’i’ non so ch’i’ di lor trar potesse:
Or che darà colui che ‘l coltel lecca?
Di gran follia credo m’intramettesse
Voler insegnar vender frutta a trec[c]a,
O ch’i’ a·letto del cane unto chiedesse.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CVIII *Falsembiante*

“Ma quand’i’ truovo un ben ricco usuraio
Infermo, vo’l sovente a vicitare,
Chéd i’ ne credo danari aportare
Non con giomelle, anzi a colmo staio.
E quando posso, e’ non riman danaio
A·ssua famiglia onde possa ingrassare;
Quand’egli è morto, il convio a sotter[r]are,
Po’ torno e sto più ad agio che gen[n]aio.
E sed i’ sono da nessun biasmato
Perch’io il pover lascio e ‘l ric[c]o stringo,
Intender fo che ‘l ricco à più peccato,
E perciò sì ‘l conforto e sì ‘l consiglio,
Insin ch’e’ d’ogne ben s’è spodestato,
E dato a me, che ‘n paradiso il pingo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIX *Falsembiante*

“Io dico che ‘n sì grande dannazione
Va l’anima per grande povertade
Come per gran riccez[z]a, in veritade;
E ciaschedun dé aver questa ‘ntenzione,
Ché ‘n un su’ libro dice Salamone:
“Guardami, Idio, per la Tua gran pietade,
Di gran ric[c]hez[z]a e di mendichitade,
E dàmi del Tu’ ben sol per ragione.
Ché que’ c[h]’à gran ric[c]hez[z]a, sì oblia
Que’ che ‘l criò, per lo su’ gran riccore,
Di che l’anima mette i·mala via.
Colui cui povertà tien in dolore,
Convien che·ssia ladrone, o muor d’envia,
O serà falsonier o mentitore”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CX *Falsembiante*

“Ancor sì non comanda la Scrittura
Che possent’uon di corpo cheg[g]ia pane,
Né ch’e’ si metta a viver d’altrù’ ane:
Questo non piace a Dio, né non n’à cura;
Né non vuol che·ll’uon faccia sale o mura,
De le limosine, alle genti strane;
Ma vuol c[h]’uon le diparta a genti umane
Di cui forza e santade à gran paura.
E sì difende ‘l buon Giustiniano,
E questo fece scriver nella leg[g]e,
Che nes[s]un dia limosina a uon sano
Che truovi a guadagnare, e·ttu t’aveg[g]i[e]
Ch’a lavorare e’ non vuol metter mano;
Ma vuol che·ttu ‘l gastighi e cacci e feg[g]i[e].

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXI *Falsembiante*

“Chi di cotà’ limosine è ‘ngrassato,
In paradiso non dé atender pregio,
Anzi vi dé atender gran dispregio,
Almen s’e’ non è privilegiato;
E s’alcun n’è, sì n’è fatto ingannato
E ‘l papa che li diè il su’ col[l]egio,
Ché dar non credo dovria privilegio
C[h]’uon sano e forte gisse mendicato:
Ché·lle limosine che son dovute
A’ vec[c]hi o magagnati san’ possanza,
A cui la morte seria gran salute,
Colui che·lle manuca i·lor gravanza,
Elle gli fieno ancor ben [car] vendute:
Di questo non bisogna aver dottanza.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXII *Falsembiante*

“Tanto quanto Gesù andò per terra,
I suo’ discepoli e’ non dimandaro
Né pane né vino, anzi il guadagnaro
Co·le lor man, se·llo Scritto non erra.
Co’ buon’ mastri divin’ ne feci guerra
Perché questo sermone predicaro
Al popolo a Parigi, e sì ‘l provaro,
C[h]’uon ch’è truante col diavol s’aferra.
Ancor, po’ che Gesù si tornò in cielo,
San Paolo predicava i compagnoni
Ched e’ sì non vendes[s]er lo Guagnelo:
Sì che di grazia fecer lor sermoni;
Di lor lavor vivien, già no’l vi celo,
Sanza fondar castella né magioni.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXIII *Falsembiante*

“Ver è ch’e’ ci à persone ispeziali
Che van cherendo lor vita per Dio,
Per ch’i’ vi dico ben c[h]’al parer mio
Egli è mercé far bene a que’ cotali.
Di questi sono alquanti bestiali
Che non ànno iscienza in lavorio,
Ed altri v’à che l’ànno, ma è rio
Il tempo, e’ lor guadagni sì son frali.
A` ‘ncor di gentil gente discacciata,
Che non son costumati a lavorare,
Ma son vi[v]uti sol di lor entrata.
A cotà’ genti dé ciascun donare,
Ché lor limosina è bene impiegata,
Sì è mercé atarli governare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXIV *Falsembiante*

“Ad alcun altro che·ffa lavoraggio,
Ma ben sua vita trar non ne poria,
Sì gli consente Idio ben truandia
Per quel che gli fallisce al su’ managgio.
Od altro pover c[h]’avesse corag[g]io
Di volere studiar in chericia,
Gran merced’è a farli cortesia
Insin ch’e’ sia de la scienza sag[g]io.
E se ‘n cavalleria alcun volesse
Intender, per la fede con sé alzare,
Non falleria già sed e’ chiedesse
Infin ch’e’ sé potesse ben montare,
E avere spezieria ch’e’ potesse
Condursi nella terra d’oltremare”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXV *Dio d’Amore e Falsembiante*

“Dì, Falsembiante: in che maniera puote
Seguire Idio chi à tutto venduto,
Ed àllo tutto a’ pover’ dispenduto,
E le sue borse son rimase vote,
Ed è forte e possente e à grosse gote?
Gli sarebbe per dritto conceduto
C[h]’a trar sua vita domandasse aiuto,
Come quest’altri che·ttu or mi note?”.
“Dico di no: che se Dio fe’ comando
C[h]’on desse tutto a’ poveri, e po’ ‘L sieva,
La Sua ‘ntenzion non fu in truandando,
E questo intendimento ti ne lieva,
Ma con buon’opre tuttor lavorando,
C[h]’uon forte in truandar l’anima grieva.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXVI *Falsembiante*

“Ancor una crudel costuma ab[b]iamo:
Contra cui no’ prendiamo a nimistate,
Quanti no’ siamo, in buona veritate,
In difamarlo noi ci asottigliamo;
E se per aventura noi sap[p]iamo
Com’e’ possa venire a dignitate,
Nascosamente noi facciàn tagliate,
Sì che di quella via noi ‘l ne gittiamo.
E ciò facciamo noi sì tracelato
Ch’e’ non saprà per cui l’avrà perduto
Infin ch’e’ non ne fia di fuor gittato.
Che s’e’ l’aves[s]e da prima saputo,
Per aventura e’ si saria scusato,
Sì ch’i’ ne saria menzonier tenuto”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXVII *Amore e Falsembiante*

“Cotesta mi par gran dislealtate”,
Rispose Amore, “Or non credi tu ‘n Cristo?”.
“I’ non, chéd e’ sarà pover e tristo
Colù’ che viverà di lealtate:
Sì ch’io non vo’ per me quelle ghignate,
Ma, come ched i’ possa, i’ pur a[c]quisto,
Ché da nessun nonn-è volontier visto
Colui che man terrà di povertate,
Anzi l’alunga ciascuno ed incaccia;
Già no·lli fia sì amico né parente
Ch[ed] egli il veg[g]a volontieri in faccia:
Sì ch’i’ vogl[i]’anzi c[h]’on mi sia ubidente,
Come ch[ed] io a Cristo ne dispiaccia,
Ched es[s]er in servag[g]io della gente.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXVIII *Falsembiante*

“Vedete che danari ànno usorieri,
Siniscalchi e provosti e maggiori,
Che tutti quanti son gran piatitori
E sì son argogliosi molto e fieri.
Ancor borghesi sopra i cavalieri
Son og[g]i tutti quanti venditori
Di lor derrate e aterminatori,
Sì ch’ogne gentil uon farà panieri.
E’ conviene ch’e’ vendan casa o terra
Infinché i borghesi siar pagati,
Che giorno e notte gli tegnono in serra.
Ma io, che porto panni devisati,
Fo creder lor che ciascheun sì erra,
E ‘nganno ingannatori e ingannati.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXIX *Falsembiante*

“Chi se ‘n vuol adirar, sì se n’adiri,
Chéd i’ vi pur conterò ogne mio fatto,
S’i’ dovess’es[s]er istrutto intrafatto,
O morto a torto com’ furo i martìri,
O discacciato come fu ‘l buon siri
Guiglielmo che di Santo Amor fu stratto:
Così ‘l conciò la mogl[i]e di Baratto,
Però ch’e’ mi rompea tutti mie’ giri.
Chéd e’ sì fu per lei sì discacciato,
E sol per verità ch’e’ sostenea,
Ched e’ fu del reame isbandeg[g]iato.
De mia vita fe’ libro, e sì leg[g]ea
Ch’e’ non volea ch’i’ gisse mendicato:
Verso mia madre troppo misprendea!

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXX *Falsembiante*

“Questo buonuon volea ch’i’ rinegasse
Mendichità e gisse lavorando,
S’i’ non avea che mia vita passando
Potesse, sanza c[h]’altro domandasse.
A quel consiglio mai no·m’acordasse:
Tropp’è gran noia l’andar travagliando.
Megli’ amo star davante adorando
Ched i’ a lavorar m’afaticasse.
Ché ‘l lavorar sì no·mi può piacere,
Néd a·cciò consentir no·mi poria,
Ché molte volte fallarei in dolere.
Più amo il manto di papalardia
Portar, perciò ch’egl[i] è mag[g]ior savere,
Ché di lui cuopr’io mia gran rinaldia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXI *Falsembiante*

“I’ sì nonn-ò più cura d’ermitag[g]i,
Né di star in diserti né ‘n foresta,
Ch’e’ vi cade sovente la tempesta:
Sì chito a·ssan Giovanni que’ boscag[g]i!
In cittadi e ‘n castella fo mie’ stag[g]i
Mostrando ched i’ faccia vita agresta;
Ma s’alla villa buon morsel s’aresta,
E’ pur convien per forza ch’i’ n’asag[g]i.
E vo dicendo ch’i’ vo fuor del mondo,
Per ch’i’ mi giuochi in sale e in palagi;
Ma chi vuol dire vero, i’ mi v’afondo.
S’i’ posso trovar via d’aver grand’agi,
Or siate certo ch’i’ no·mi nascondo
[..... -agi]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXII *Falsembiante*

“Ancor sì m’intrametto in far mogliaz[z]o,
Altr’or fo paci, altr’or sì son sensale;
Manovaldo mi fo, ma quel cotale
Che mi vi mette, l’ab[b]iate per paz[z]o,
Ché de’ suo’ beni i’ fo torre e palaz[z]o,
O ver be’ dormitori o belle sale,
Sì che, s’egli à figl[i]uol, poco gli vale
I ben’ del padre, sì ‘l te ne rispaz[z]o.
E se voi aveste nulla cosa a fare
Intorno di colui con ch’i’ riparo,
Diràllami, faròlla capitare;
Ma non convien mostrar ch’e’ vi si’ amaro
A largamente sapermi donare,
Ché ‘l mi’ servigio i’ ‘l vendo molto caro.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXIII *Falsembiante*

“I’ sì son de’ valletti d’Antecristo,
Di quel’ ladron’ che dice la Scrittura
Che fanno molto santa portatura,
E ciaschedun di loro è ipocristo.
Agnol pietoso par quand’uon l’à visto,
Di fora sì fa dolze portatura;
Ma egli è dentro lupo per natura,
Che divora la gente Gesocristo.
Così ab[b]iamo impreso mare e terra,
E sì facciàn per tutto ordinamento:
Chi no·l’oserva, di[ci]àn c[h]’a fede erra.
Tanto facciàn co·nostro tradimento
Che tutto ‘l mondo à preso co·noi guerra;
Ma tutti gli mettiamo a perdimento.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXIV *Falsembiante*

“Sed i’ truovo in cittade o in castello,
Colà ove paterin sia riparato,
Crede[n]te ched e’ sia o consolato,
Od altr’uon, ma’ ch’e’ sia mio ribello,
O prete ched e’ sia o chericello
Che tenga amica, o giolivo parlato,
E’ convien che per me sia gastigato,
Ché ciaschedun mi dotta, sì son fello.
Ancor gastigo altressì usurai
E que’ che sopravendono a credenza,
Roffiane e forziere e bordelai;
E ‘n ciasc[hed]uno i’ ò malivogl[i]enza;
Ma, che che duol tu senti, no’l dirai,
Sì fortemente dotti mia sentenza.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXV *Falsembiante*

“Que’ che vorrà campar del mi’ furore,
Ec[c]o qui preste le mie difensioni:
Grosse lamprede, o ver di gran salmoni
Aporti, [o] lucci, sanza far sentore.
La buona anguilla nonn-è già peg[g]iore;
Alose o tinche o buoni storioni,
Torte battute o tartere o fiadoni:
Queste son cose d’ãquistar mi’ amore,
O s’e’ mi manda ancor grossi cavretti
O gran cappon’ di muda be·nodriti
O paperi novelli o coniglietti.
Da ch’e’ ci avrà di ta’ morse’ serviti,
No·gli bisogna di far gran disdetti:
Dica che g[i]uoco, e giuoc’a tutti ‘nviti.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXVI *Falsembiante*

“Que’ che non pensa d’aver l’armadure
Ch’i’ v’ò contate, o ver preziosi vini,
O ver di be’ sac[c]hetti di fiorini,
Le mie sentenze lor fìer troppo dure.
Né non si fidi già in escritture,
Ché saccian che co’ mie’ mastri divini
I’ proverò ched e’ son paterini
E farò lor sentir le gran calure.
Od i’ farò almen ch’e’ fien murati,
O darò lor sì dure penitenze
Che me’ lor fôra ch’e’ non fosser nati.
A Prato ed a Arez[z]o e a Firenze
N’ò io distrutti molti e iscacciati:
Dolente è que’ che cade a mie sentenze”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXVII *Lo Dio d’Amor e Falsembiante*

“Dì, Falsembiante, per gran cortesia,
Po’ ch’i’ t’ò ritenuto di mia gente,
E òtti fatto don sì bel[l]’e gente
Che·ttu se’ re della baratteria,
Afideròm[m]i in te, o è follia?
Fa che·ttu me ne facci conoscente:
Ched i’ sarei doman troppo dolente,
Se·ttu pensassi a farmi villania”.
“Per Dio merzé, messer, non vi dottate,
Ched i’ vi do la fé, tal com’i’ porto,
Ched i’ vi terrò pura lealtate”.
“Allor”, sì disse Amor, “ogno[n] si’ acorto
D’armarsi con su’ arme devisate,
E vadasi al castel che·ssì m’à morto”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXVIII *L’armata de’ baroni*

A` l’armadure ciaschedun sì prese,
E sì s’armãr con molto gran valore
Per dar a Gelosia pene e dolore,
Se contra lor [i]stesse alle difese;
Ed alcun prese scudo, altro pavese,
Ispade e lancie, a molto gran romore,
Dicendo ciaschedun al Die d’Amore
Che quelle guardie saran morte e prese.
Or sì vi conterò la contenenza
Che Falsembiante fece in quella andata
Colla su’ amica CostrettaAstinenza.
E’ no·mmenãr co·llor già gente armata,
Ma come gente di gran penitenza
Si mosser per fornir ben lor giornata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXIX *Com’Astinenza andò a MalaBoc[c]a*

AstinenzaCostretta la primera
Sì si vestì di roba di renduta,
Velata che non fosse conosciuta;
Con un saltero i·man facea preghera.
La ciera sua non parea molto fera,
Anz’era umile e piana divenuta;
Al saltero una filza avea penduta
Di paternostri, e ‘l laccio di fil iera.
Ed i·mano un bordon di ladorneccio
Portava, il qual le donò ser Baratto:
Già non era di melo né di leccio;
Il suocer le l’avea tagliato e fatto.
La scarsella avea piena di forneccio.
Ver’ MalaBocca andò per darli matto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXX *Come Falsembiante andò a Malabo[c]a*

FalsoSembiante, sì com’on di coro
Religioso e di santa vita,
S’aparec[c]hiò, e sì avea vestita
La roba frate Alberto d’Agimoro.
Il su’ bordon non fu di secomoro,
Ma di gran falsità ben ripulita;
La sua scarsella avea pien’e fornita
Di tradigion, più che d’argento o d’oro;
Ed una bib[b]ia al collo tutta sola
Portava: in seno avea rasoio tagl[i]ente,
Ch’el fece fab[b]ricare a Tagliagola,
Di che quel MalaBocca maldicente
Fu poi strangolato, che tal gola
Avea de dir male d’ogne gente.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXI *MalaBoc[c]a, Falsembiante e CostrettaAstinenza*

Così n’andaro in lor pellegrinag[g]io
La buona pellegrina e ‘l pellegrino;
Ver’ MalaBocca ten[n]er lor camino,
Che troppo ben guardava su’ passag[g]io.
E Falsembiante malizioso e sag[g]io
Il salutò col capo molto chino,
E sì gli diss’: “I’ son mastro divino,
Sì siàn venuti a voi per ostellag[g]io”.
MalaBocca conob[b]e ben Sembiante,
Ma non che·ffosse Falso; sì rispuose
C[h]’ostel dareb[b]e lor: “Venite avante”.
Ad Astinenza molto mente puose,
Ché veduta l’avea per volte mante;
Ma per Costretta già mai no·lla spuose.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXII ***MalaBocca, Falsembiante e CostrettaAstinenza***

MalaBocca sì ‘nchiede i pellegrini
Di loro stato e di lor condizione,
E dimandò qual era la cagione
Ch’egli andavan sì matti e sì tapini.
Que’ disser: “No’ sì siàn mastri divini,
E sì cerchiamo in ogne regione
De l’anime che vanno a perdizione,
Per rimenargli a lor dritti camini.
Or par che·ssia piaciuto al Salvatore
D’averci qui condotti per vo’ dire
E gastigar del vostro grande errore,
S’e’ vi piace d’intender e d’udire”.
[..... -ore]
O fatto, i’ sì son presto d’ubidire”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXIII *Astinenza*

Astinenza sì cominciò a parlare,
E disse: “La vertude più sovrana
Che possa aver la criatura umana,
Sì è della sua lingua rifrenare.
Sovr’ogn’altra persona a noi sì pare
Ch’esto peccato in voi fiorisce e grana;
Se no’l lasciate, egli è cosa certana
Che nello ‘nferno vi conviene andare:
Ché pez[z]’à c[h]’una truffola levaste
Sopra ‘l valetto che vo’ ben sapete:
Con gran[de] torto voi il difamaste,
Ch’e’ non pensava a·cciò che vo’ credete.
Bellacoglienza tanto ne gravaste
Ch’ella fu messa là ove vo’ vedete”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXIV *MalaBocca*

Udendo MalaBocca c[h]’Astinenza
Sì forte il biasimava e riprendea,
Sì·ssi crucciò, e disse ch’e’ volea
C[h]’andasser fuor della su’apartenenza:
“Vo’ credete coprir Bellacoglienza
Di ciò che quel valetto far credea.
Be·llo dissi e dirò, che la volea
Donargli il fior, e quest’era sua ‘ntenza.
Quel [n]onn-errò del bascio, quest’è certo:
Per ch’i’ vi dico, a voi divinatori,
Che questo fatto non fia già coverto.
Vo’ mi parete due inganatori:
Andate fuor di casa, che ‘n aperto
Vi dico ch’i’ non vo’ tapinatori”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXV *Falsembiante*

FalsoSembiante disse: “Per merzede
Vi priego, MalaBocca, c[h]’ascoltiate;
Ché, quand’uon conta pura ver[i]tate,
Molt’è folle colù’ che no·lla crede.
Vo’ sete ben certan che·ll’uon non vede
Che ‘l valletto vi porti nimistate;
Sed egli amasse tanto l’amistate
Del fior quanto vo’ dite, a buona fede,
Egli à gran pezza ch’e’ v’avria morto,
Avendogli voi fatto tal oltraggio;
Ma non vi pensa e non si n’è acorto,
E·ttuttor sì vi mostra buon corag[g]io,
E servireb[b]evi a dritto e a torto
Come que’ ch’è cortese e prode e saggio”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXVI *La ripentenza MalaBocca*

Ser MalaBocca si fu ripentuto
Di ciò ch’egli avea detto o pur pensato,
Ched e’ credette ben aver fallato;
Sì disse a Falsembiante: “Il vostro aiuto
Convien ch’i’ ag[g]ia, ch’i’ non sia perduto”;
E ‘mantenente si fu inginoc[c]hiato,
E disse: “I’ sì vogli’esser confessato
D’ogne peccato che m’è avenuto”.
AstinenzaCostretta il prese allora,
Che·ss’era molto ben sobarcolata,
E Falsembiante col rasoio lavora:
A MalaBocca la gola à tagliata.
E po’ ru[p]per la porta san’ dimora:
Larghez[z]a e Cortesia l’àn[n]o passata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXVII *Cortesia e Larghezza e la Vec[c]hia*

Tutti quat[t]ro passarono il portale,
E sì trovaron dentro a la porpresa
La Vec[c]hia, che del castro era [di]scesa;
Quando gli vide, le ne parve male,
Ma tuttavia non ne fece segnale.
Larghez[z]a e Cortesia sì l'àn[n]o atesa,
E disserle: "Madonna, san' difesa
Potete prender quanto il nostro vale:
Chéd egli è vostro, sanza farne parte,
E sì ve ne doniàn già la sagina
E sopra tutto vi vogliàn far carte".
La Vec[c]hia, che sapea ben la dottrina,
Ché molte volte avea studiato l'arte,
Gline marzìa molto e gline 'nchina.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CXXXVIII *Falsembiante*

Falsembiante a la Vec[c]hia sì à detto:
“Per Dio, gentil madonna preziosa
Che sempre foste e siete pietosa,
Che vo’ ag[g]iate merzé del buon valletto!
Ch’e’ vi piaccia portarle un gioeletto
Da la sua parte a quella graziosa
Bellacoglienza, che gli fu nascosa,
De ch’egli à avuto il cuor molto distretto!
Vedete qui fermagli ch’e’ le manda,
E queste anella e questi intrecciatoi,
Ancora questa nobil[e] ghirlanda.
Il fatto suo si tien tratutto a voi;
Ciascun di noi per sé lui racomanda:
Del fatto vostro penserén ben noi”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXXXIX *La Vec[c]hia e Falsembiante*

La Vec[c]hia sì rispuose san’ tardare,
Ché ‘l male e ‘l ben sapea quantunque n’era:
“Vo’ mi fate [co]sì dolze preghera
Ch’i’ no lo vi saprei giamai vietare.
Questi gioelli i’ sì vo’ ben portare
E dargli nella più bella maniera
Che io potrò; ma una lingua fiera,
Che quaentr’è, mi fa molto dottare,
E·cciò è MalaBocca maldicente,
Che [con]truova ogne dì nuovi misfatti,
Né non riguarda amico né parente”.
“No’l ridottate più giamai a fatti,
Ché noi sì l’ab[b]iàn morto, quel dolente,
Sanza che ‘n noi trovasse trieva o patti.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXL *La Vec[c]hia e Falsembiante*

“Certanamente noi gli ab[b]iàn segata
La gola, e giace morto nel fossato:
E’ nonn-à guar’ che noi l’ab[b]iàn gittato,
E ‘l diavol sì n’à l’anima portata”.
La Vec[c]hia sì rispuose: “Or è amendata
Nostra bisogna, po’ ch’egli è sì andato.
Colui cu’ vo’ m’avete acomandato,
I’ metterò in servirlo mia pensata.
Dit’al valetto ch’i’ ne parleròe:
Quando vedrò che ‘l fatto sia ben giunto,
I’ tutta sola a chieder sì·ll’andròe”.
Allor si parte, ed ivi fece punto,
E tutti quanti a Dio gli acomandòe.
Molto mi parve che ‘l fatto sie ‘n punto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLI *La Vec[c]hia e Bellacoglienza*

Dritta a la camera a la donna mia
N’andò la Vec[c]hia, quanto può trot[t]ando,
E quella la trovò molto pensando,
Come se fosse d’una voglia ria.
Crucciosa so ch’era, che non ridia:
Sì tosto al[l]or la va riconfortando,
E disse: “Figl[i]uola mia, io ti comando
Che·ttu nonn-entri già i·mmalinconia;
E vê·cciò che tu’ amico ti presenta”.
Allor le mostra quelle gioielette,
Pregandola c[h]’a prenderl’aconsenta:
“Reguarda com’elle son belle e nette”.
E quell’a domandar non fu già lenta
Chi era colui che gliele tramette.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Il bel valetto di cu’ biasmo avesti
Giadisse, sì [è] colui che·lle ti manda,
E ‘l rimanente c[h]’à è a tua comanda:
Unquanche uon più cortese non vedesti.
E priegati, se mai ben gli volesti,
Che per l’amor di lui questa ghirlanda
Deg[g]ie portare, e sì sé racomanda
Del tutto a te: gran peccato faresti
Se ‘l su’ presente tu gli rifusassi;
Ch’i’ son certana ch’e’ si disper[r]ebbe
Se·ttu così del tutto lo sfidassi;
Ché, quanto ch’e’ potesse, e’ sì fareb[b]e
Per te, e sofferria che·llo ‘ngaggiassi,
E, se ‘l vendessi, sì gli piacereb[b]e”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLIII *Bellacoglienza e la Vec[c]hia*

“Madonna, i’ dotto tanto Gelosia
Ch’esto presente prender non osasse;
Che·sse domane ella mi domandasse:
“Chi ‘l ti donò?”, io come le diria?”.
“Risposta buona i’ non ti celeria:
Che s’ogn’altra risposta ti fal[l]asse,
Sì dì almen ched i’ la ti donasse,
Ed i’ le dirò ben che così sia”.
Allor la Vec[c]hia la ghirlanda prese,
E ‘n su le treccie bionde a la pulcella
La puose, e quella guar’ non si contese;
E po’ prese lo spec[c]hio, e sì·ll’apella,
E disse: “Vien’ qua, figl[i]uola cortese.
Riguàrdati se·ttu se’ punto bella”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLIV *Bellacoglienza e la Vec[c]hia*

Al[l]or Bellacoglienza più non tarda:
Immantenente lo spec[c]hi’ eb[b]e i·mmano,
Sì vide il viso suo umile e piano;
Per molte volte nello spec[c]hio guarda.
La Vec[c]hia, che·ll’avea presa en sua guarda,
Le giura e dice: “Per lo Dio sovrano,
Ch’unquanche Isotta, l’amica Tristano,
[.....-arda]
Come tu·sse’, figl[i]uola mia gentile.
Or convien che·ttu ab[b]ie il mi’ consiglio,
Che cader non potessi in luogo vile.
Se non sai guari, no·mmi maraviglio,
Ché giovan uon non puot’esser sottile,
Chéd i’, quanto più vivo, più asottiglio

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLV *La Vec[c]hia*

“Figl[i]uola mia cortese ed insegnata,
La tua gran gioia sì è ancor a venire.
Or me convien me pianger e languire,
Ché·lla mia sì se n’è tutta passata
Né non fie mai per me più ritrovata,
Chéd ella mi giurò di non reddire.
Or vo’ consigliar te, che dé’ sentire
in caldo del brandon, che sie avisata
Che non facessi sì come fec’io:
De ch’i’ son trista quand’e’ me’n rimembra,
Ch’i’ non posso tornare a·lavorio.
Per ch’i’ te dico ben ched e’ mi sembra:
Se·ttu creder vor[r]à’ ‘l consiglio mio,
Tu sì non perderai aver né membra.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLVI *La Vec[c]hia*

“Se del giuoco d’amor i’ fosse essuta
Ben sag[g]ia quand’i’ era giovanella,
I’ sare’ ric[c]a più che damigella
O donna che·ttu ag[g]ie og[g]i veduta:
Ch’i’ fu’ sì trapiacente in mia venuta
Che per tutto cor[r]ea la novella
Com’i’ era cortese e gente e bella;
Ma·cciò mi pesa, ch’i’ non fu’ saputa.
Or sì mi doglio quand’i’ mi rimiro
Dentro a lo spec[c]hio, ed i’ veg[g]o invec[c]hiarmi:
Molto nel mi[o] cuore me n’adiro.
Ver è ched i’ di ciò non posso atarmi,
Sì che per molte volte ne sospiro
Quand’i’ veg[g]io biltate abandonarmi.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLVII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Per tutto ‘l mondo i’ era ricordata,
Com’io t’ò detto, de la mia bieltate,
E molte zuffe ne fur cominciate,
E molta gente alcun’ora piagata;
Ché que’ che mi crede’ aver più legata,
Assà’ mostrav’i’ più di duritate:
Le mie promesse gli venian fallate,
C[h]’altre persone m’avieno inarrata.
Per molte volte m’era l’uscio rotto
E tentennato, quand’io mi dormia;
Ma già per ciò io non facea lor motto,
Perciò ched i’ avea altra compagnia,
A cui intender facea che ‘l su’ disdotto
Mi piacea più che null’altro che·ssia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXLVIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“I’ era bella e giovane e folletta,
Ma non era a la scuola de l’amore
Istata; ma i’ so or ben per cuore
La pratica la qual ti fie qui detta.
Usanza me n’à fatta sì savietta
Ched i’ non dotterei nessun lettore
Che di ciò mi facesse desinore,
Ma’ ched i’ fosse bella e giovanetta:
Chéd egli è tanto ched i’ non finai
Che·lla scienza i’ ò nel mi’ coraggio;
Sed e’ ti piace, tu l’ascolterai,
Ma i’ no l’eb[b]i sanza gran damag[g]io:
Molta pen’e travaglio vi durai;
Ma pur almen sen[n]’è [re]mas’e usag[g]io.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIL *La Vec[c]hia*

“Molti buon’uomini i’ ò già ‘ngannati,
Quand’i’ gli tenni ne’ mie’ lacci presi:
Ma prima fu’ ‘ngannata tanti mesi
Che’ più de’ mie’ sollaz[z]i eran passati.
Centomilia cotanti barattati
N’avrei, s’i’ a buon’or gli avesse tesi,
E conti e cavalieri e gran borgesi,
Che molti fiorin’ d’oro m’avrian dati.
Ma quand’i’ me n’avidi, egli era tardi,
Chéd i’ era già fuor di giovanez[z]a,
Ed eranmi falliti i dolzi isguardi,
Perché ‘n sua bàlia mi tenea vec[c]hiez[z]a.
Or convien, figlia mia, che tu ti guardi
Che·ttu non ti conduchi a tale strez[z]a.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CL *La Vec[c]hia*

“Molto mi dolea il cuor quand’i’ vedea
Che·ll’uscio mio stava in tal sog[g]iorno,
Che vi solea aver tal pressa ‘ntorno
Che tutta la contrada ne dolea.
Ma, quanto a me, e’ no·me ne calea,
Ché troppo più piacea loro quel torno,
Ch’i’ era allora di sì grande attorno
Che tutto quanto il mondo mi’ parea.
Or convenia che di dolor morisse
Quand’i’ vedea que’ giovani passare,
E ciaschedun parea che mi schernisse.
Vec[c]hia increspata mi facean chiamare
A colù’ solamente che giadisse
Più carnalmente mi solea amare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLI *La Vec[c]hia*

“Ancora d’altra parte cuore umano
Non pensereb[b]e il gran dolor ch’i’ sento
Tratutte l’ore ch’i’ ò pensamento
De’ be’ basciar’ che m’ànno dato mano.
Ogni sollaz[z]o m’è og[g]i lontano,
Ma non ira e dolori e gran tormento:
Costor sì ànno fatto saramento
Ch’i’ non uscirò lor mai di tra mano.
Or puo’ veder com’i’ son arivata,
Né al mi’ mal nonn-à altra cagione
Se non ched i’ fu’ troppo tosto nata.
Ma sap[p]ie ched io ò ferma intenzione
Ch’i’ sarò ancor[a] per te vendicata,
Se·ttu ben riterrai la mia lezione.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Non ne pos[s]’altrementi far vengianza
Se non per insegnarti mia dottrina,
Perciò che·llo me’ cor sì m’indovina
Che·ttu darai lor ancor gran micianza,
A que’ ribaldi che tanta viltanza
Me diceano da sera e da mattina:
Tutti gli met[t]erai anche a la china,
Se·ttu sa’ ben tener la tua bilanza.
Ché sie certana, s’i’ fosse dell’ag[g]io,
Figl[i]uola mia, che tu·sse’ or presente,
Ch’i’ gli pagherè’ ben di lor oltrag[g]io,
Sì che ciascuno farè’ star dolente:
Già tanto non sareb[b]e pro’ né sag[g]io
Ched i’ non ne facesse panchiedente.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“In gran povertà tutti gli met[t]esse,
Sì come t’ò di sopra sermonato,
E sì sareb[b]e il primo dispogliato
Colui che più cara mi tenesse.
Di nessun mai pietà no·mi’n prendesse,
Ché ciaschedun vorrè’ aver disertato:
Ché sie certana ch’e’ nonn-è peccato
Punir la lor malatia, chi potesse.
Ma e’ non dottan guari mia minac[c]ia
Né non fan forza di cosa ch’i’ dica,
Perciò ch’ò troppo crespa la mia fac[c]ia.
Figliuola mia, se Dio ti benedica,
I’ non so chi vendetta me ne faccia
Se non tu, ch’i’ per me son troppo antica.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLIV *La Vec[c]hia*

“Molte volte mi disse quel ribaldo
Per cu’ i’ eb[b]i tanta pena e male,
Ched e’ ver[r]eb[b]e ancor tal temporale
Ched i’ avrei spesso fredo e caldo.
Ben disse ver, quel conto ò i’ ben saldo;
Ma, per l’agio ch’i’ eb[b]i, tanto e tale
Che tutto quanto il cuor mi ne trasale,
Quand’i’ rimembro, sì ritorna baldo.
Giovane donna nonn-è mai oziosa,
Sed ella ben al fatto si ripensa
Per ch’ella sti’ a menar vita gioiosa:
Ma’ ch’ella pensi a chieder sua dispensa,
Sì ch’ella non si truovi sofrattosa
Quando vec[c]hiez[z]a vien poi che·ll’ade[n]sa.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLV *La Vec[c]hia*

“Or ti dirò, figl[i]uola mia cortese,
Po’ che parlar possiamo per ligire
E più arditamente, ver vo’ dire,
Che·nnoi non solavàn (quest’è palese):
Tu sì sa’ ben ch’i’ son di stran paese,
E sì son messa qui per te nodrire;
Sì ti priego, figl[i]uola, che·tt’atire
In saper guadagnar ben tue spese.
Non ch’i’ te dica ch’i’ voglia pensare
Che·ttu d’amor per me sie ‘nviluppata;
Ma tuttor sì te voglio ricontare
La via ond’io dovrè’ esser andata,
E ‘n che maniera mi dovea menare
Anzi che mia bieltà fosse passata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLVI *La Vec[c]hia*

“Figl[i]uola mia, chi vuol gioir d’Amore,
Convien ch’e’ sap[p]ia i suo’ comandamenti.
Ver è ched e’ ve n’à due dispiacenti:
Chi se ne ‘mbriga, sì fa gran follore.
L’un dice che ‘n un sol luogo il tu’ cuore
Tu metta, sanza farne partimenti;
L’altro vuol che·ssie largo in far presenti:
Chi di ciò ‘l crede, falleria ancore.
I·nulla guisa, figlia, vo’ sia larga,
Né che ‘l tu’ cuor tu metti in un sol loco;
Ma, se mi credi, in più luoghi lo larga.
Se dài presenti, fa che vaglian poco:
Che s’e’ ti dona Lucca, dàgli Barga;
Così sarai tuttor donna del g[i]uoco.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLVII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Donar di femina si è gran follia,
Sed e’ non s’è un poco a genti atrare
Là dov’ella si creda su’ pro fare,
E che ‘l su’ don radoppiato le sia.
Quella non tengh’i’ già per villania:
Ben ti consento quel cotal donare,
Ché·ttu non vi puo’ se non guadagnare;
Gran senn’è a far tal mercatantia.
Agl[i] uomini lasciàn far la larghez[z]a,
Ché Natura la ci à, pez[z]’è, vietata:
Dunque a femina farla si è sempiez[z]a;
Avegna che ciascun’è sì afetata
Che volontier di lei fanno stranez[z]a,
Sed e’ non s’è alcuna disperata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLVIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“I’ lodo ben, se·ttu vuo’ far amico,
Che ‘l bel valletto, che tant’è piacente,
Che de le gioie ti fece presente
E àtti amata di gran tempo antico,
Che·ttu sì·ll’ami; ma tuttor ti dico
Che·ttu no·ll’ami troppo fermamente,
Ma fa che degli altr’ami sag[g]iamente,
Ché ‘l cuor che·nn’ama un sol, non val un fico.
Ed io te ne chiedrò degl[i] altri assai,
Sì che d’aver sarai tuttor guernita,
Ed e’ n’andranno con pene e con guai.
Se·ttu mi credi, e Cristo ti dà vita,
Tu·tti fodrai d’ermine e di vai,
E la tua borsa fia tuttor fornita.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLIX *La Vec[c]hia*

“Buon acontar fa uon c[h]’ab[b]ia danari,
Ma’ ched e’ sia chi ben pelar li saccia:
Con quel cotal fa buon intrar in caccia,
Ma’ ched e’ no·gli tenga troppo cari.
L’acontanza a color che·sson avari
Sì par c[h]’a Dio e al mondo dispiaccia:
Non dar mangiar a que’ cotali in taccia,
Ché ‘ pagamenti lor son troppo amari.
Ma fa pur ch’e’ ti paghi inanzi mano:
Ché, quand’e’ sarà ben volonteroso,
Per la fé ched i’ dô a san Germano,
E’ non potrà tener nulla nascoso,
Già tanto non fia sag[g]io né certano,
Sed e’ sarà di quel disideroso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLX *La Vec[c]hia*

“E quando sol’a sol con lui sarai,
Sì fa che·ttu gli facci saramenti
Che·ttu per suo danar non ti consenti,
Ma sol per grande amor che·ttu in lui ài.
Se fosser mille, a ciascun lo dirai,
E sì ‘l te crederanno, que’ dolenti;
E saccie far sì che ciascuno adenti
Insin c[h]’a povertà gli metterai.
Che·ttu·sse’ tutta loro, dé’ giurare;
Se·tti spergiuri, non vi metter piato,
Ché Dio non se ne fa se non ghignare:
Ché sie certana ch’e’ non è peccato,
Chi si spergiura per voler pelare
Colui che fie di te così ingannato.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXI *La Vec[c]hia*

“A gran pena può femina venire
A buon capo di questa gente rea.
Dido non potte ritenere Enea
Ched e’ non si volesse pur fug[g]ire,
Che mise tanta pena in lui servire.
Or che fece Gesono de Medea,
Che, per gl’incantamenti che sapea,
El[l]a ‘l sep[p]e di morte guarentire,
E po’ sì la lasciò, quel disleale?
Und’è c[he] ‘ figl[i]uoli ched ella avea
Di lui, gli mise a morte, e fece male;
Ma era tanto il ben ch’ella volea,
Ch’ella lasciò tutta pietà carnale
Per crucciar que’ che tanto le piacea.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Molti d’assempri dartene saprei,
Ma troppo saria lungo parlamento:
Ciascuna dé aver fermo intendimento
Di scorticargli, sì son falsi e rei.
S’i’ fosse giovane, io ben lo farei;
Ma io so’ fuor di quel proponimento,
Ché troppo fu tosto il mi’ nascimento,
Sì ch’i’ vendetta far non ne potrei.
Ma·ttu, figl[i]uola mia, che·sse’ fornita
D’ogn’armadura per farne vengianza,
Sì fa che ‘nverso lor sie ben sentita,
E presta di dar lor pen’e micianza:
Se·ttu ‘l fai, d’ogni mal m’avrà’ guerita
E alleg[g]iata d’ogne mia pesanza.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Tutti quanti le vann’og[g]i blasmando,
E ciaschedun sì le ‘ntende a ‘ngannare:
Così ciascuna di noi dé pensare
A far che·lla ric[c]hez[z]a i metta bando.
E non dob[b]iamo andar il cuor fic[c]ando
In un sol luogo, ma dob[b]iàn pensare
In che maniera gli possiàn pigliare,
E girgli tutti quanti dispogliando.
La femina dé aver amici molti,
E di ciascun sì dé prender su’ agio,
E far sì c[h]’uon gli tenga per istolti;
E far lor vender la tor[r]e e ‘l palagio,
O casa o casolari o vero i colti,
Sì che ciascun ci viva a gran misagio.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXIV *La Vec[c]hia*

“Ne·libro mio so ben che studierai,
Figlia, quando sarai da me partita:
Certana son, se Dio ti dona vita,
Che·ttu ter[r]ai scuola e leg[g]erai.
Di leg[g]erne da me congìo tu n’ài;
Ma guàrdati che·ttu sie ben fornita
Di ritener la lezion c[h]’ài udita,
E saviamente la ripeterai.
In casa non istar punto rinch[i]usa:
A chiesa o vero a ballo o vero a piaz[z]a,
In queste cota’ luogora sì usa;
E fa che·ttu gli die ben de la maz[z]a,
A que’ che per vederti sta a la musa
E che d’averti giorno e notte impaz[z]a.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXV *La Vec[c]hia*

“Or sì·tti vo’ parlar del guernimento,
Come ciascuna dé andar parata,
Che per sua falta non fosse lasciata
Sì ch’ella fosse sanza adornamento.
In ben lisciarsi sia su’ ‘ntendimento;
Ma, prima che si mostri a la brigata,
Convien ch’ella si sia ben ispec[c]hiata,
Che sopra lei non ag[g]ia fallimento.
E s’ella va da·ssera o da mattina
Fuor di sua casa, vada contamente:
Non vada troppo ritta né tro’ china,
Sì ch’ella piaccia a chi·lla terrà mente;
E se·lla roba troppo le traina,
Levila un poco, e fiene più piacente.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXVI *La Vec[c]hia*

“E s’ella nonn-è bella di visag[g]io,
Cortesemente lor torni la testa,
E sì lor mostri, sanza far aresta,
Le belle bionde treccie d’avantag[g]io.
Se non son bionde, tingale in erbag[g]io
E a l’uovo, e po’ vada a noz[z]e e a festa;
E, quando va, si muova sì a sesta
C[h]’al su’ muover nonn-ab[b]ia punt’oltrag[g]io.
E gentamente vada balestrando
Intorno a·ssé cogli oc[c]hi a chi la guarda,
E ‘l più che puote ne vad’acrocando.
Faccia sembianti che molto le tarda
Ched ella fosse tutta al su’ comando;
Ma d’amar nullo non fosse musarda.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXVII *La Vec[c]hia*

“La lupa intendo che, per non fallire
A prender ella pecora o montone,
Quand’e’ le par di mangiar [i]stagione,
Ne va, per una, un cento e più asalire.
Così si dé la femina civire
Sed ella avesse in sé nulla ragione:
Contra ciascuno riz[z]ar dé il pennone
Per fargli nella sua rete fedire;
Chéd ella non sa quale riman preso,
Insin ch’ella no·gli à tarpata l’ala,
Sì dé tener tuttor l’aiuol su’ teso,
E prendergli a’ gheroni e a la sala;
Ma se sapesse, o ch’ell’avesse inteso,
Ch’e’ fosse pover, gittil per la scala.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXVIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“E s’ella ne prendesse gran funata,
Di que’ che ciaschedun la vuol brocciare,
Sì si dé ben la femina avisare
D’assegnar a ciascun la sua giornata:
Chéd ella rimar[r]ia troppo ‘ngannata
Se·ll’un l’altro vi potesse trovare,
C[h]’almen le conver[r]eb[b]e pur fallare
Alla gioia che ciascun l’avria recata.
Ché non si vuoi lasciar già lor niente
Di ch’e’ potesser far grande ‘ngrassata,
Ch’egli è perduto tutto il rimanente.
Perciò convien che ciascuna avisata
Sia, sì che pover rimanga il dolente,
Ed ella sia ricca e ben calzata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXIX *La Vec[c]hia*

“In poveruon no·metter già tu’amore,
Ché nonn-è cosa che poveruon vaglia:
Di lu’ non puo’ tu aver se non battaglia
E pena e povertate e gran dolore.
Lasciar ti farian robe di colore
E sovente dormire in su la paglia:
Non t’intrametter di cotal merda[g]lia,
Ché troppo i’ ‘l ti por[r]ia a gran fallore.
Né non amar già oste trapassante:
Però che mutan tante ostellerie
C[h]’aver non posson cuor fermo né stante;
Lor fatti non son che baratterie.
Ma se·tti donan, non sie rifusante;
E fa co·llui infinte druderie.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXX *La Vec[c]hia*

“Né non amar già uon che ‘n sua bel[l]ez[z]a
Si fidi, né ch’egli a lisciarsi ‘ntenda:
In quel cotal non vo’ che·ttu t’intenda,
Ma ‘l più che puo’, da·llu’ fa istranez[z]a.
L’uon che si piace, fa gran scipidez[z]a
E grand’orgoglio, e l’ira di Dio atenda;
E Tolemeo sì ‘l dice in sua leg[g]enda,
C[h]’aver non p[u]ote amore né franchez[z]a;
Né non puote aver cuor di ben amare:
Ché tutto ciò ch’egli avrà detto a l’una,
Sì tosto il va a l’altra ricontare;
E così pensa a far di ciascheduna,
Né non intende c[h]’a·llor barattare:
Udita n’ò la pianta di più d’una.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXI *La Vec[c]hia*

“E s’e’ viene alcuno che·tti prometta,
E per promessa vuol c[h]’a·llui t’attacci,
I’ non vo’ già perciò che·ttu lo scacci,
Ma digli c[h]’altro termine ti metta,
Perciò c[h]’avrai allor troppo gran fretta;
E sì vo’ ben che ‘l basci e che·ll’abracci,
Ma guarda che co·llui più non t’impacci,
S’e’ non iscioglie prima la maletta.
O s’alcun ti mandasse alcuno scritto,
Sì guarda ben la sua intenzione,
Ched e’ non ab[b]ia fintamente scritto;
E poi sì gl[i]ene fa risponsione,
Ma non sì tosto: atendi un petitto,
Sì ch’egli un poco stea in sospez[z]one.

CLXXII *La Vec[c]hia*

“E quando tu udirai la sua domanda,
Già troppo tosto non sie d’acordanza,
Né non fare di lui gran rifusanza:
Nostr’arte sì no’l vuol né no’l comanda.
Cortesemente da·tte sì ‘l ne manda,
E stea il su’ fatto tuttora in bilanza,
Sì ch’egli ab[b]ia paura ed isperanza
Insin ch’e’ sia del tutto a tua comanda.
E quand’e’ ti farà più pregheria,
Tu gli dirai tuttor che·ttu sie presta
A fargli tutta quanta cortesia,
E dì che ‘l su’amor forte ti molesta;
E così caccia la paura via.
Po’ dimora con lui e fagli festa.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Gran festa gli farai e grand’onore,
E dì come gli ti se’ tutta data,
Ma non per cosa ch’e’ t’ag[g]ia donata,
Se non per fino e per leal amore;
Che·ttu à’ rifiutato gran signore,
Che riccamente t’avreb[b]e dotata:
“Ma credo che m’avete incantata,
Per ched i’ son entrata in quest’errore”.
Allor sì ‘l bascierai istrettamente,
Pregando’l che·lla cosa sia sagreta,
Sì che no’l senta mai nessuna gente.
A·cciò ch’e’ vorrà fare, istarà’ cheta;
Ma guarda che non fosse aconsentente
A nessun, se non se per la moneta.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXIV *La Vec[c]hia*

“Chi ‘l su’ amico non cessa di pelare
Infin ch’egli ag[g]ia penna in ala o in dosso
E che d’ogn’altro bene e’ sia sì scosso
Ched e’ non si ne possa mai volare,
Quella cotal dovria l’uon maneg[g]iare:
Ché, quanto ch’ella costa più di grosso,
Più fia tenuta cara, dirlo posso,
E più la vorrà que’ tuttor amare.
Ché·ttu non pregi nulla cosa mai
Se nonn-è quel che·ttu n’avrà’ pagato:
Se poco costa, poco il pregerai;
E quel che·tti sarà as[s]ai costato,
A l’avenante caro il ti terrai,
Con tutto n’ag[g]ie tu ben mal mercato.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXV *La Vec[c]hia*

“E al pelar convien aver maniera,
Sì che l’uomo a veder non si ne desse,
Che tutto in pruova l’uon glile facesse:
Forse ch’e’ volgeria la sua bandiera.
Ma faccia sì la madre, o ciamberiera,
Od altri in cui fidar ben si potesse,
Che ciascuna di lor sì gli chiedesse
Paternostri o coreg[g]ia od amoniera.
Ancor la cameriera dica: “Sire,
A questa donna una roba bisogna,
Ma sì vi teme che no’l v’osa dire.
Gran danno l’à già fatto [la] vergogna,
Ma vo’ sì no’l dovreste sofferire;
Nonn-à dove le carni sue ripogna”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXVI *La Vec[c]hia*

“Ancor gli dica un’altra de l’ostello:
“Se madonna volesse far fol[l]ag[g]io
Con un bel[l]issim’uon di gran parag[g]io,
In fatto suo sareb[b]e ben e bello,
E sì sareb[b]e donna d’un castello;
Ma ‘nverso voi à sì leal corag[g]io
Ch’ella non prendereb[b]e nul vantag[g]io
Di che doman vo’ foste su’ ribello”.
Allor la donna, come ch’e’ le piaccia
Udir quelle parole, sì lor dica
E comandi che ciascuna si taccia;
E puote dir: “Se Dio mi benedica,
Tropp’ò del su’ quand’i’ l’ò tra·lle braccia”;
E facciagli sott’al mantel la fica.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXVII *La Vec[c]hia*

“E se·lla donna punto s’avedesse
Che quel dolente fosse ravisato
Che troppo largamente l’à donato,
E ch’e’ di sua follia si ripentesse,
Allora in presto domandar dovesse
E dir di renderglile a dì nomato;
Ma egli è ben in mia lezion vietato
Ched ella mai nessun non ne rendesse.
E quando un altro vien, gli faccia segno
Ched ella sia crudelmente cruc[c]iata,
E dica che·lla roba sua sia ‘n pegno:
“Molto mi duol c[h]’uon crede ch’i’ si’agiata”.
E que’ procaccierà danari o ‘ngegno,
Sì che la roba sua fie dispegnata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXVIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“E se ‘l diavol l’avesse fatto sag[g]io,
E che·lla donna veg[g]ia ch’à dottanza
Di non volerle far questa prestanza,
Imantenente sì gli mandi un gaggio:
La roba ch’ell’avrà più d’avantaggio;
E dica che·lla tenga in rimembranza
De’ suo’ danari, e non faccia mostranza
Ched e’ le paia noia né oltrag[g]io.
E poi atenderà alcuna festa,
Pasqua o Kalendi Mag[g]io o Pentecosta,
E sia intorno a·llui sanza far resta,
Dicendo che giamai a la sua costa
Non dormirà, se que’ no gl[i]ele presta:
La roba, in questa guisa, sì gl[i]el’osta.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXIX *La Vec[c]hia*

“E s’alcun altro nonn-à che donare,
Ma vorràssi passar per saramenta,
E dirà che·lla ‘ndoman più di trenta
O livre o soldi le dovrà recare,
Le saramenta lor non dé pregiare,
Chéd e’ non è nes[s]un che non ti menta;
E dice l’un a l’altro: “La giomenta
Che·ttu ti sai, mi credette ingannare;
Ingannar mi credette, i’ l’ò ‘ngannata”.
Per che già femina non dee servire
Insin ch’ella non è prima pagata:
Ché, quando à fatto, e’ si pensa fug[g]ire,
Ed ella si riman ivi scornata.
Per molte volte fui a quel martire.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXX *La Vec[c]hia*

“Sì dé la donna, s’ell’è ben sentita,
Quando ricever dovrà quell’amante,
Mostralli di paura gran sembiante,
E ch’ella dotta troppo es[s]er udita,
E che si mette a rischio de la vita.
Allor dé esser tutta tremolante,
Dir ch’ivi non puot’es[s]er dimorante:
Poi stea, che·llor gioia sia compita.
Ancor convien ched ella si’ acorta
Di far ch’e’ v’entri per qualche spiraglio,
Ben potess’egli entrarvi per la porta:
Ché tutte cose c[h]’uom’à con travaglio,
Par c[h]’uon le pregi più, e le diporta;
Quel che non costa, l’uon non pregia un aglio.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXI *La Vec[c]hia*

“E quand’ella serà rasicurata,
Tantosto sì gli dé cor[r]ere indosso,
E dir: “Lassa tapina, be·mi posso
Chìamar dolente, s’i’ son arivata
Ched i’ sì amo, e sì non son amata!
Molt’ò lo ‘ntendimento rud’e grosso,
Quando il me’ core s’è sì forte ismosso
D’esser di voi così inamorata”.
E po’ sì gli rimuova quistione,
E dica: “La lontana dimoranza
C[h]’avete fatta, nonn·è san’ cagione.
Ben so che voi avete un’altr’amanza,
La qual tenete in camera o ‘n pregione”;
Sì moster[r]à d’averne gran pesanza.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Quando ‘l cattivo ch’è·ssarà ‘ncacato,
La cui pensea non serà verace,
Sì crederà che ‘l fatto su’ ti piace
Tanto, c[h]’ogn’altro n’ài abandonato,
E che ‘l tu’ cuor gli s’è tretutto dato;
Né non si guarderà de la fallacie
In che la volpe si riposa e giace,
Insin ch’e’ non serà ben corredato.
Ché molt’è folle que’ che cred’avere
Nessuna femina che·ssia sua propia,
Per don ched e’ facesse di su’avere.
Que’ che·lla vuol, la cheg[g]ia ‘nn-Atiopia,
Ché qua no·lla pott’io ancor vedere,
E s’ella ci è, sì porta l’aritropia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Da l’altra parte elle son franche nate:
La leg[g]e sì·lle trã di lor franchez[z]a,
Dove Natura per sua nobilez[z]a
Le mise quando prima fur criate.
Or l’à la leg[g]e sì condizionate
Ed àlle messe a sì gran distrezza,
Che ciascheduna volontier s’adrez[z]a
Come tornar potesse a franchitate.
Vedi l’uccel del bosco quand’è ‘n gab[b]ia:
E’ canterà di cuor, ciò vi fi’aviso,
Ma no·gli piace vivanda ch’egli ab[b]ia;
Ché Natur’a franchez[z]a l’à sì miso
Che giorno e notte de l’uscirne arrab[b]ia,
Nonn-avrà tanto miglio o grano o riso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXIV *La Vec[c]hia*

“E se quell’uon desdir non si degnasse,
Anzi dirà, per farla più crucciosa,
Che·nn’à un’altra, ch’è·ssì amorosa
Di lui che per null’altro no’l cambiasse,
Guardisi quella che non si crucciasse.
Con tutto ciò se ne mostri dogliosa
Di fuor, ma dentr’al cuor ne sia gioiosa:
Ancora più s’egli s’a[re]negasse;
E dicagli che già quella vendetta
Non sarà fatta se non sol per lei,
Sì ch’ella il pagherà di quella detta.
Allor da·llui sì mi dipartirei;
Di far amico moster[r]è’ gran fretta,
Sì ch’io in quella angoscia il lascierei.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXV *La Vec[c]hia*

“S’avessi messo termine a un’ora
A due, c[h]’avresti fatto gran follia,
E l’un conteco in camera sia,
E l’altro viene apresso san’ dimora,
Al di dietro dirai ch’egl[i] è ancora
El signor tuo lassù; ch’e’ non poria
Far dimoranza, ma tost’una fia:
“Il fante o voi, tornate a poca d’ora”.
E poi sì ‘l butti fuori e torni suso,
E trag[g]a l’altro fuor della burella,
Che molto gli è anoiato star rinchiuso;
Po’ i trag[g]a la guarnac[c]a e la gonella,
Dicendo ch’ell’è tanto stata giuso
Per lo marito ch’era nella cella.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXVI *La Vec[c]hia*

“Ne·letto su’ si metta in braccio in braccio
Co·llui insiem’e faccian lor diporto;
Ma dica tuttor: “Lassa, crudel torto
E` questo che ‘nverso il mi’ sire faccio”.
E nella gioia c[h]’à, gli metta impaccio,
Sì ch’egli ab[b]ia paura e disconforto:
Dicer li dee ch’e’ sarebbe morto,
Sanz’averne rispetto, molt’avaccio,
Se·ll’uon sapesse ch’e’ fosse co·llei:
“Ed i’ lassa dolente, malaurata,
So che vitiperata ne sarei
E ch’i’ per man de’ mie’ sarè’ ismembrata”.
E in questa paura i’ ‘l metterei,
Che da lui ne sareb[b]e più amata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXVII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Quand’a quel lavorio messi saranno,
Ben sag[g]iamente deg[g]ian operare,
E l’un atender e l’altro studiare,
Secondo ch’egli al[l]or si sentiranno;
Né sì non dé parer lor già affanno
Di voler ben a modo mantacare,
C[h]’amendue insieme deg[g]ian afinare
Lor dilettanza; e dimorasse un anno!
E se·lla donna non v’à disianza,
Sì ‘nfinga in tutte guise che vi sia,
Sì gline mostri molto gran sembianza:
Istringa ‘l forte e basci ‘l tuttavia;
Quando l’uom’avrà sua dilettanza,
Sì paia ch’ella tramortita sia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXVIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Se l’uon può tanto far ched ella vada
Al su’albergo la notte a dormire,
Sì dé alla femina ben sovenire
Ched ella il faccia star un poco a bada.
E que’, che guarderà tuttor la strada,
Certana sie ch’e’ li parrà morire
Insin ched e’ no·lla vedrà venire:
Ché·ll’amor c[h]’uom’atarda, vie più agrada.
E quand’ella sarà a l’ostel venuta,
Sì dica a que’, che·nn’è sì amoroso,
Ched ella per su’amor tropp’è arguta;
Ché ‘l su’ marito n’è troppo geloso,
Sì che dubita molto esser battuta:
Così gli faccia forte il pauroso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CLXXXIX *La Vec[c]hia*

“Se quel geloso la tien sì fermata
Ch’ella non poss’andar là ov’ella vuole,
Sì gli faccia intendente che·ssi duole
D’una sua gotta, che d’averl’è usata:
Per ch’e’ convien ch’ella sia stufata,
Ché colla stufa guerir se ne suole;
Po’ bullirà ramerin e viuole
E camamilla e salvia, e fie bagnata.
E ‘l geloso dirà: “Va arditamente,
E mena teco buona compagnia”;
Ma molto ne fia nel su’ cuor dolente,
Ma vede ch’e’ desdir no·gliel poria.
Quella mena conseco alcuna gente,
La qual sapranno ben sua malatia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXC *La Vec[c]hia*

“Ancor non dé aver femina credenza
Che nessun uon malia farle potesse,
Néd ella ancor altrui, s’ella volesse
C[h]’altri l’amasse contra sua voglienza.
Medea, in cui fu tanta sapienza,
Non potte far che Gesono tenesse
Per arte nulla ch’ella gli facesse,
Sì che ‘nver’ lei tornasse la sua ‘ntenza.
Sì non dea nessun don, che guari vaglia,
A null’amante, tanto l’apregiasse:
Doni borsa, guanciale o tovaglia,
O cinturetta che poco costasse,
Covricef[f]o o aguglier di bella taglia,
O gumitol di fil, s’egli ‘l degnasse.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCI *La Vec[c]hia*

“Ma ciascun uon c[h]’avesse in sé ragione
O che del mondo ben savio sareb[b]e,
Ma’ don’ di femina non prendereb[b]e,
Ché non son che·llacci di tradigione:
Ché quella che facesse donagione,
Contra la sua natura pec[c]hereb[b]e,
E ‘n gran follia ciascun gliele por[r]eb[b]e,
Sed ella no’l facesse a falligione.
Perciò ciascuna pensi, quando dona,
Che doni nella guisa c[h]’ò parlato:
Sì che, quand’ella avrà passata nona,
Il guardacuor suo sia sì fodrato
Ch’ella non cag[g]ia a merzé di persona;
E ciò tien tutto al ben aver guardato.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCII *La Vec[c]hia*

“Al ben guardar fallì’, lassa dolente,
Ché·cciò c[h]’all’un togliea, a l’altro donava:
Come ‘l danaio venia, così n’andava;
Non facea forza d’aver rimanente.
I’ era di ciascun molto prendente,
E tutto quanto a un ribaldo il dava,
Che puttana comune mi chiamava
E mi battea la schiena ben sovente.
Questi era que’ che più mi piacea,
E gli altri “amici dolci” i’ apellava,
Ma solamente a costui ben volea,
Che mol[to] tosto s’apacificava
Comeco, sì battuta no·m’avea,
Ché troppo dolzemente mi scuf[f]iava.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCIII *La Vec[c]hia*

“S’i’ fosse stata, per l’anima mia,
Ben savia in giovanez[z]a e conos[c]ente,
Ch’i’ era allor sì bella e sì piacente
Che ‘n ogne parte novelle ne gia,
I’ sarè’ troppo ric[c]a, in fede mia;
Ma i’ sì ‘l dava tutto a quel dolente,
C[h]’a ben far non fu anche intendente,
Ma tutto dispendea in ribalderia.
Né no·gli pia[c]que nulla risparmiare,
Ch’e’ tutto no’l beves[s]e e no’l giucasse,
Tant’era temperato a pur mal fare:
Sì c[h]’a la fin conven[n]e ch’i’·lasciasse,
Quand’i’ non eb[b]i più che gli donare;
E me e sé di gran ric[c]hez[z]a trasse”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCIV *La Vec[c]hia*

Così à quella vec[c]hia sermonato.
Bellacoglienza molto queta è stata
E molto volontier l'à ascoltata,
E molto e' n'è 'l su' cuor rasicurato:
Sì ch'e' seria leg[g]ier a far mercato,
Se Gelosia non vi fosse trovata
E' tre portier', che fanno gran veg[g]hiata,
Ché ciascun dotta d'es[s]er barattato.
Di MalaBocca, che già era morto,
Nessun di lor non facea lada ciera,
Ché chi l'amasse sì faria gran torto:
Ché non finava di dìe né da sera
Di dar a Gelosia nuovo sconforto,
Né non dicea giamai parola vera.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CXCV *Bellacoglienza*

Bellacoglienza la parola prese
E sì rispuose, come ben parlante:
“Gentil madonna, i’ vi fo grazie mante
Che di vostr’arte mi siete cortese;
Ma ‘l fatto de l’amor no·m’è palese,
Se non se in parole trapassante.
Ched i’ sia di danar ben procacciante?
I’ n’ò assai per farne belle spese.
D’avere in me maniera bella e gente,
A·cciò vogl’i’ ben metter mia balia,
In tal maniera che·ssia sofficiente.
Se voi mi parlate di malia,
Ch’ella non può tornar già cuor di gente:
Creda ‘l chi vuol, ch’i’ la teng’a·ffollia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCVI *Bellacoglienza*

“Del bel valetto che vo’ mi parlate,
In cui tanta vertute è riposata,
Sed e’ la s’à, per me gli sia chitata:
S’i’ l’amo, i’ l’amerò come mi’ frate.
Ma, per le gioie ch’e’ m’à presentate,
La mia veduta no·gli fia vietata;
Ma venga il più che puote a la celata,
E sed e’ piace a voi, sì ‘l ci menate.
Ma’ che sia fatto tosto san’ dimora,
Perciò che Gelosia non può sofrire
Ched ella stea sanza vedermi un’ora:
Ché molte volte si parte per gire,
E ‘l diavol, che di notte in lei lavora,
Sì·lla fa·mantenente rivenire”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCVII *La Vec[c]hia e Bellacoglienza*

La Vec[c]hia sì la va rasicurando,
E dice: “Sopra me lascia la cura
Di questo fatto; non aver paura,
Chéd io il saprò ben andar celando.
E gisse Gelosia tuttor cercando
Qua entro, sì seria grande sciagura
S’ella ‘l trovasse, ma i’ son sicura
Che poco le varria su’ gir sognando”.
“Dunque potete voi farlo venire,
Ma’ ched e’ si contegna come sag[g]io,
Ch’e’ non pensasse a·ffar nes[s]un ardire”.
“Figl[i]uola mia, e’ non fece anche oltrag[g]io
I·nessun luogo, ch’i’ udisse dire,
Ma troppo il loda l’uon di gran vantag[g]io”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXCVIII *L’Amante e la Vec[c]hia*

Al[l]or sì fecer fine al parlamento.
La Vec[c]hia se ne venne al mi’ ostello,
E disse: “Avrò io sorcotto e mantello
Sed i’ t’aporto alcun buon argomento
Che ti trarrà di questo tuo tormento?”.
I’ dissi: “Sì, d’un verde fino e bello;
Ma, sì sacciate, non fia san’ pennello
Di grigio, con ogn’altro guernimento”.
D’Amico mi sovenne, che mi disse
Ched i’ facesse larga promessione,
Ma ‘l più ch’i’ posso, il pagar soferisse:
Avegna ch’i’ avea ferma ‘ntenzione
De dar ben a coste’, s’ella m’aprisse,
Che quell’uscisse fuor della pregione.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIC *La Vec[c]hia*

La Vec[c]hia disse allor: “Amico mio,
Queste son le novelle ch’i’ t’aporto:
Bellacoglienza salute e conforto
Te manda, se m’aiuti l’alto Dio;
Sì ch’i’ ti dico ben ched i’ cred’io
Che·lla tua nave ariverà a tal porto
Che·ttu sì coglierai il fior dell’orto”.
(Questo motto fu quel che mi guerìo).
“Or te dirò, amico, che farai:
All’uscio c[h]’apre verso del giardino,
Ben chetamente tu te ne ver[r]ai;
Ed i’ sì me ne vo ‘l dritto camino,
E sì farò c[h]’aperto il troverai,
Sì che·ttu avrai il fior in tuo dimino”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CC *L’Amante*

La Vec[c]hia atanto da me si diparte,
E ‘l camin eb[b]e tosto passeg[g]iato;
E quand’i fui un poco dimorato,
Verso ‘l giardin n’andai da l’altra parte,
Pregando Idio che mi conduca ‘n parte
Ch’i’ de mia malatia fosse sanato.
Aperto l’uscio sì eb[b]i trovato;
Ver è ch’era soc[c]hiuso tutto ad arte.
Con molto gran paura dentro entrai;
Ma, quand’i’ vidi MalaBocca morto,
Vie men del fatto mio sì mi dottai.
Amor trovai, che mi diè gran conforto
Co·l’oste sua, e molto m’allegrai
Che ciascun v’era ‘n aiutarm’acorto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCI *L’Amante e Bellacoglienza*

Com’i’ v’ò detto, a tutto lor podere
Lo Dio d’Amor e la sua baronia
Presti eran tutti a far senn’e follia
Per acompiérmi tutto ‘l mio volere.
Allor pensai s’i’ potesse vedere
DolzeRiguardo per cosa che sia:
Inmantenente Amor a me lo ‘nvia,
Di che mi fece molto gran piacere.
E que’ sì mi mostrò Bellacoglienza,
Che ‘nmantenente venne a salutarmi,
E sì mi fece grande proferenza;
E po’ sì cominciò a merziarmi
Delle mie gioie: di ch’ell’avea vogl[i]enza
Di quel presente ancor guiderdonarmi.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCII *L’Amante e Bellacoglienza*

I’ le dissi: “Madonna, grazie rendo
A voi, quando prender le degnaste,
Che tanto forte me ne consolaste
Ch’a pena mai mag[g]ior gioia atendo;
E s’i’ l’ò mai, da voi aver la ‘[n]tendo;
Sì c[h]’a me piace se ciò che pigliaste
O la persona mia ancora ingag[g]iaste
O la vendeste: mai non vi contendo”.
Quella mi disse: “Molto gran merzede.
Di me vi dico fate ‘l somigliante,
C[h]’a bene e a onore i’ v’amo, a·ffede”.
Delle sue cose i’ non fu’ rifusante;
Ma spesso falla ciò che ‘l folle crede:
Così avenne al buon di ser Durante.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCIII *L’Amante e lo Schifo*

Quand’i’ udì’ l’oferta che facea,
Del fatto mi’ credett’es[s]er certano:
Allor sì volli al fior porre la mano,
Che molto ringrossato mi parea.
Lo Schifo sopra me forte correa
Dicendo: “Trãt’adietro, mal villano;
Che·sse m’aiuti Idio e san Germano,
I’ non son or quel ch’i’ esser solea.
El diavol sì ti ci à or [r]amenato:
Se mi trovasti a l’altra volta lento,
Or sie certan ch’i’ ti parrò cambiato.
Me’ ti varria che fossi a Benivento”.
Allor al capez[z]al m’eb[b]e pigliato,
E domandò chi era mi’ guarento.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCIV *Vergogna e Paura*

Po’ sentì ‘l fatto Vergogna e Paura,
Quand’ell’udiron quel villan gridare,
Ciascuna sì vi corse a·llui aitare,
E quello Schifo molto s’assicura.
Idio e tutti i santi ciascun giura
Ched el[l]e ‘l mi faranno comperare:
Allor ciascun mi cominciò a buttare;
Molto mi fecer dispett’e ladura;
E disson ch’i’ avea troppo fallato,
Po’ che Bellacoglienza per su’ onore
E lei e ‘l suo m’avea abandonato,
Ched i’ pensava d’imbolarle il fiore.
Dritt’era ch’i’ ne fosse gastigato,
Sì ch’i’ ne stesse ma’ sempre in dolore.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCV *L’Amante*

Allor Bellacoglienza fu fermata
Da questi tre portier’ sotto tre porte,
E con una catena molto forte
Quella gentil eb[b]ero ‘ncatenata.
Po’ corser sopra me, quella brigata,
E disson: “Sopra te cadran le sorte”.
Allor credetti ben ricever morte,
Tanto facean di me gran malmenata:
Sì ch’i’ misericordia domandai
A Paura, a Vergogna e a quel crudele;
Ma i·nessuna guisa la trovai.
Ciascun sì mi era più amar che fele;
Per molte volte merzé lor gridai:
Que’ mi dicean: “Per niente bele”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCVI *L’Amante*

Come costor m’andavar tormentando,
E l’oste al Die d’Amor si fu sentita,
E sì cognob[b]or ch’i’ avea infralita
La boce: inmantenente miser bando
Che ciasc[hed]un si vada apparec[c]hiando
A me socor[r]ere a campar la vita,
Ch’ella sareb[b]e in poca d’or fallita
Sed e’ no·mi venis[s]er confortando.
Quando i portir’ sentiron quel baratto,
Inmantenente tra lor si giuraro
Di non renderla a forza né a patto;
E que’ di fuor ancor sì si legaro
Di non partirsi se non fosse fatto,
E di questo tra·llor si fidanzaro.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCVII *La battaglia*

Franchez[z]a sì venne primieramente
Contra lo Schifo, ch’è molto oltrag[g]ioso
E per sembianti fiero e corag[g]ioso;
Ma quella venne molto umilemente.
Lo Schifo sì ponea trop[p]o ben mente,
Ché ‘n ben guardar era molto invioso,
Che quella non potesse di nascoso
Entrar dentr’a la porta con sua gente.
Franchez[z]a mise mano ad una lancia,
Sì s’aperse per dare a quel cagnone,
E crudelmente contra lui la lancia.
Lo Schifo sì avea in mano un gran bastone,
E co·lo scudo il colpo sì·llo schiancia,
E fiede a·llei e falla gir boccone.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCVIII *Lo Schifo e Franchez[z]a*

La lancia a pez[z]i a pez[z]i à dispez[z]ata,
E po’ avisa un colpo ismisurato,
Sì che tutto lo scudo à squartellato:
Franchez[z]a sì è in terra rovesciata.
E que’ de’ colpi fa gran dimenata,
E la bella merzé gli à domandato,
Sì c[h]’a Pietà ne prese gran peccato:
Verso il villan sì·ss’è adiriz[z]ata;
E con uno spunton lo gì pungendo,
E di lagrime tuttora il bagnava,
Sì che ‘l vlllan si venia rendendo,
C[h]’aviso gli era ched egli afogava.
Allor Vergogna vi venne cor[r]endo
Perché lo Schifo “Socorso!” gridava.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCIX

Vergogna sì venne contra Pietate,
E molto fortemente la minaccia;
E quella, che dottava sua minaccia,
Sì s’aparec[c]hia a mostrar sua bontate,
Ché ben conosce sua diversitate.
Vergogna a una spada la man caccia,
Sì disse: “I’ vo’ ben che ciaschedun saccia
Ched i’ te pagherò di tue der[r]ate”.
Allora alza la spada a·llei fedire;
Ma Diletto sì venne a·llei atare,
E di suo scudo la sep[p]e coprire;
E poi si torna per lei vendicare:
Ma Vergogna sapea sì lo schermire
Che que’ no·lla potea magagnare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCX

Vergogna mise allor man a la spada
E sì se ne vien dritta ver’ Diletto.
Inmantenente lo scudo eb[b]e al petto,
E disse: “Come vuole andar, sì vada,
Ched i’ te pur farò votar la strada,
O tu farai di piana terra letto”.
Allor lo fie’ co·molto gran dispetto,
Come colei ch’a uc[c]iderlo bada;
Sì che lo mise giù tutto stenduto,
E sì l’avreb[b]e fesso insino a’ denti;
Ma, quando BenCelar l’eb[b]e veduto,
Perciò ch’egli eran distretti parenti,
Inmantenente sì gli fece aiuto.
Vergogna disse: “I’ vi farò dolenti”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXI

Molt’era buon guer[r]ier quel BenCelare:
Alzò la spada, e sì fiede Vergogna
Sì gran colpo ched ella tutta ingrogna,
E poco ne fallì d’a terra andare.
E poi la cominciò a predicare,
E disse: “Tu non devi aver vergogna
Di me, ched e’ nonn-à di qui a Bologna
Nessun c[h]’un fatto saccia me’ celare
Che saprò io, e perciò porto il nome”.
Vergogna sì non sep[p]e allor che dire.
Paura la sgridò: “Cugina, come?
A`’ tu perduto tutto tuo ardire?
Or veg[g]h’i’ ben che vita troppo dura,
Quando tu ài paura di morire”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXII A la sua spada mise man Paura
Per soccor[r]er Vergogna sua vicina:
A BenCelar diè per sì grande aina
Ched e’ fu de la vita inn-aventura.
Contra lei battaglia poco dura:
Ardimento s’occorse a la miccina
Con una spada molto chiara e fina,
E sì·lle fece molto gran paura.
Ma tuttavia Paura si conforta
E prese cuore in far sua difensione
E disse c[h]’ameria me’ d’esser morta
C[h]’Ardimento le tolga sua ragione:
Allora in testa gli diè tal iscorta
Ched ella ‘l mise giù in terra boccone.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXIII Quando Sicurtà vide c[h]’Ardimento
Contra Paura avea tutto perduto,
Sì corse là per dargli il su’ aiuto
E cominciò il su’ torniamento.
Ma contra lei non eb[b]e duramento:
Paura quello stormo eb[b]e vincuto,
E anche un altro, s’e’ vi fosse essuto.
Ma Sicurtà sì eb[b]e acorgimento:
Ispada e scudo gittò tosto in terra,
E·mantenente con ambo le mani
A le tempie a Paura sì s’aferra.
E gli altri, ch’eran tutti lassi e vani,
Ciascun si levò suso, e sì s’aterra
A quella zuffa, com’e’ fosser cani.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXIV

Molto durò tra·llor quella battaglia,
Che ciascun roba e carni vi si straccia.
L’un l’altro abatte per forza di braccia.
Non fu veduta mai tal rapresaglia,
Che que’ d’entro facien troppo gran taglia
Di que’ di fuor; Amor allor procaccia
Che tra lor una trieva sì si faccia
Di venti dì, o di più, che me’ vaglia:
Ch’e’ vede ben che mai quella fortez[z]a,
Se·lla madre non v’è, non prendereb[b]e.
Allor la manda a chieder per Franchez[z]a.
Contra colei sa ben non si ter[r]eb[b]e:
Che s’ella il su’ brandon ver’ lor adrez[z]a,
Imantenente tutti gli ardereb[b]e.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXV

Franchez[z]a sì s’è de l’oste partita,
E Amor sì·ll’à ben incaricato
Che·lli dica a la madre ogne su’ stato,
Com’egli è a gran rischio de la vita,
E che sua forza è molto infiebolita:
Ch’ella faccia che per lei si’ aiutato.
Allor Franchez[z]a sì à cavalcato,
E dritto a Ceceron sì se n’è ita,
Credendo che vi fosse la diessa:
Ma el[l]’er’ita in bosco per cacciare,
Sì che Franchez[z]a n’andò dritt’a essa.
Sott’una quercia la trovò ombreare:
Quella sì tosto in ginoc[c]hie s’è messa,
E dolzemente l’eb[b]e a salutare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXVI “Molte salute, madonna, v’aporto
Dal vostro figlio: e’ priegavi per Dio
Che ‘l socor[r]iate, od egli è in punto rio,
Ché Gelosia gli fa troppo gran torto;
Ch’ e’ nonn-à guar ched e’ fu quasi morto
‘N una battaglia, nella qual fu’ io.
Ancor si par ben nel visag[g]io mio,
Che molto mi vi fu strett’ed atorto”.
Allor Venusso fu molto crucciata,
E disse ben che·lla fortez[z]a fia
Molto tosto per lei tutta ‘mbraciata;
Ed a malgrado ancor di Gelosia
Ella serà per terra rovesciata:
No·lle varrà già guardia che vi sia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXVII Venusso sì montò sus’un ronzino
Corsiere, ch’era buon da cacciagione,
E con sua gente n’andò a Cicerone:
Sì comanda che sia prest’al matino
Il carro suo, ch’era d’oro fino.
Imantenente fu messo i·limone
E presto tutto, sì ben per ragione
Che, quando vuol, puote entrar in camino.
Ma non volle caval per limoniere
Né per tirare il car[r]o, anzi fe’ trare
Cinque colombi d’un su’ colombiere:
A corde di fil d’or gli fe’ legare.
Non bisognava avervi carettiere,
Ché·lla dea gli sapea ben guidare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXVIII Di gran vantag[g]io fu ‘l carro prestato.
Venusso ben matin v’è su salita,
E sì sacciate ch’ell’era guernita
E d’arco e di brandon ben impennato;
E seco porta fuoco temperato.
Così da Ciceron sì s’è partita,
E dritta all’oste del figl[i]uol n’è ita
Con suo’ colombi che ‘l car[r]’àn tirato.
Lo Dio d’Amor sì avea rotte le trieve
Prima che Veno vi fosse arivata,
Ché troppo gli parea l’atender grieve.
Venus[so] dritta a lui sì se n’è andata,
Sì disse: “Figl[i]uol, non dottar, ché ‘n brieve
Questa fortez[z]a no’ avremo ater[r]ata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXIX

“Figl[i]uol mi’, tu farai un saramento,
E io d’altra parte sì ‘l farò̀e,
Che castitate i’ ma’ non lascierò̀e
In femina che ag[g]ia intendimento,
Né tu in non che·tti si’ a piacimento.
Ed i’ te dico ben ch’i’ lavorrò̀e
Col mi’ brandone: sì gli scalderò̀e
Che ciaschedun verrà a comandamento”.
Per far le saramenta sì aportaro,
En luogo di relique e di messale,
Brandoni e archi e saette; sì giuraro
Di suso, e dis[s]er c[h]’altrettanto vale.
Color de l’oste ancor vi s’acordaro,
Ché ciaschedun sapea le Dicretale.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXX

Venus[so], che d’assalire era presta,
Sì comanda a ciascun ched e’ s’arenda
O che la mercé ciascheduno atenda,
Ch’ella la guarda lor tratutta presta.
E sì lor à giurato, per sua testa,
Ched e’ non fia nessun che si difenda,
Ch’ella de la persona no·gli afenda:
E così ciaschedun sì amonesta.
Vergogna sì respuose: “I’ non vi dotto.
Se nel castel non fosse se non io,
Non crederei che fosse per voi rotto.
Quando vi piace intrare a·lavorio,
Già per minaccie no·mi ‘ntrate sotto,
Né vo’ né que’ che d’amor si fa dio”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXI Quando Venùs intese che Vergogna
Parlò sì arditamente contr’a·llei,
Sì gl[i] à giurato per tutti gli dèi
Ch’ella le farà ancor gran vergogna;
E poi villanamente la rampogna,
Dicendo: “Garza, poco pregerei
Il mi’ brandon, sed i’ te non potrei
Farti ricoverare in una fogna.
Già tanto non se’ figlia di Ragione,
Che sempre co’ figl[i]uoi m’à guer[r]eg[g]iato,
Ch’i’ non ti metta fuoco nel groppone”.
Ed a Paura ancor da l’altro lato:
“Ben poco varrà vostra difensione,
Quand’i’ v’avrò il fornel ben riscaldato”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXII Molto le va Venus[so] minacciando,
Dicendo, se no·rendono il castello,
Ched ella metterà fuoco al fornello,
Sì che per forza le n’andrà cacciando.
E disse: “A mille diavol’ v’acomando,
Chi amor fug[g]e, e fosse mi’ fratello!
Perdio, i’ le farò tener bordello,
Color che l’amor vanno sì schifando:
Ched e’ non è più gioia che ben amare.
Rendetemi il castel, o veramente
I’ ‘l farò imantenente giù versare;
E poi avremo il fior certanamente,
E sì ‘l faremo in tal modo sfogliare
Che poi non fia vetato a nulla gente”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXIII Venus[so] la sua roba à socorciata,
Crucciosa per sembianti molto e fiera;
Verso ‘l castel tenne sua caminiera,
E ivi sì s’è un poco riposata;
E riposando sì eb[b]e avisata,
Come cole’ ch’era sottil archiera,
Tra due pilastri una balestriera,
La qual Natura v’avea compas[s]ata.
In su’ pilastri una image avea asisa;
D’argento fin sembiava, sì lucea:
Trop[p]’era ben tagl[i]ata a gran divisa.
Di sotto un santuaro sì avea:
D’un drap[p]o era coperto, sì in ta’ guisa
Che ‘l santuaro punto non parea.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXIV

Troppo avea quel[l]’imagine ‘l [vi]saggio
Tagliato di tranobile faz[z]one:
Molto pensai d’andarvi a processione
E di fornirvi mie pelligrinag[g]io;
E sì no·mi saria paruto oltrag[g]io
Di starvi un dì davanti ginoc[c]hione,
E poi di notte es[s]ervi su boccone,
E di donarne ancor ben gran logag[g]io.
Ched i’ era certan, sed i’ toccasse
L’erlique che di sotto eran riposte,
Che ogne mal ch’i’ avesse mi sanasse;
E fosse mal di capo, o ver di coste,
Od altra malatia, che mi gravasse,
A tutte m’avria fatto donar soste.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXV

Venùs allora già più non atende,
Però ched ella sì vuol ben mostrare
A ciaschedun ciò ched ella sa fare:
Imantenente l’arco su’ sì tende,
E poi prende il brandone e sì l’ac[c]ende;
Sì no·lle parve pena lo scoc[c]are,
E per la balestriera il fe’ volare,
Sì che ‘l castel ma’ più non si difende.
Imantenente il fuoco sì s’aprese:
Per lo castello ciascun si fug[g]ìo,
Sì che nessun vi fece più difese.
Lo Schifo disse: “Qui no·sto più io”;
Vergogna si fug[g]ì in istran paese,
Paura a gra·fatica si partìo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXVI Quando ‘l castello fu così imbrasciato
E che·lle guardie fur fug[g]ite via,
Alor sì v’entrò entro Cortesia
Per la figl[i]uola trar di quello stato;
E Franchez[z]’e Pietà da l’altro lato
Sì andaron co·llei in compagnia.
Cortesia sì·lle disse: “Figlia mia,
Molt’ò avuto di te il cuor crucciato,
Ché stata se’ gran tempo impregionata.
La Gelosia ag[g]i’or mala ventura,
Quando tenuta t’à tanto serrata.
Lo Schifo e Vergogna con Paura
Se son fug[g]iti, e la gol’à tagliata
Ser MalaBocca per sua disventura.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXVII “Figl[i]uola mia, per Dio e per merzede,
Ag[g]ie pietà di quel leal amante,
Che per te à soferte pene tante
Che dir no’l ti poria, in buona fede.
In nessun altro idio che·tte non crede,
E tuttora a·cciò è stato fermo e stante:
Figl[i]uola mia, or gli fa tal sembiante
Ch’e’ sia certano di ciò c[h]’or non vede”.
Bellacoglienza disse: “I’ gli abandono
E me e ‘l fiore e ciò ch’i’ ò ‘n podere,
E ched e’ prenda tutto quanto in dono.
Per altre volte avea alcun volere,
Ma nonn-era sì agiata com’or sono:
Or ne può fare tutto ‘l su’ piacere”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXVIII Quand’i’ udì’ quel buon risposto fino
Che·lla gentil rispuose, [m’ inviai]
Ed a balestriera m’adriz[z]ai,
Ché quel sì era il mi’ dritto camino;
E sì v’andai come buon pellegrino,
Ch’un bordon noderuto v’aportai,
E la scarsella non dimenticai,
La qual v’apiccò buon mastro divino.
Tutto mi’ arnese, tal chent’i’ portava,
Se di condurl’al port’ò in mia ventura,
Di toccarne l’erlique i’ pur pensava.
Nel mi’ bordon non avea fer[r]atura,
Ché giamai contra pietre no·ll’urtava;
La scarsella sì era san’ costura.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXIX

Tant’andai giorno e notte caminando,
Col mi’ bordon che non era ferrato,
Che ‘ntra’ duo be’ pilastri fu’ arivato:
Molto s’andò il mi’ cuor riconfortando.
Dritt’a l’erlique venni apressimando,
E·mantenente mi fu’ inginoc[c]hiato
Per adorar quel [bel] corpo beato;
Po’ venni la coverta solevando.
E poi provai sed i’ potea il bordone,
In quella balestriera ch’i’ v’ò detto,
Metterlo dentro tutto di randone;
Ma i’ non potti, ch’ell’era sì stretto
L’entrata, che ‘l fatto andò in falligione.
La prima volta i’ vi fu’ ben distretto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXX

Pe·più volte fallì’ a·llui ficcare,
Perciò che ‘n nulla guisa vi capea;
E·lla scarsella c[h]’al bordon pendea,
Tuttor di sotto la facea urtare,
Credendo il bordon me’ far entrare;
Ma già nessuna cosa mi valea.
Ma a la fine i’ pur tanto scotea
Ched i’ pur lo facea oltre passare:
Sì ch’io allora il fior tutto sfogl[i]ai,
E la semenza ch’i’ avea portata,
Quand’eb[b]i arato, sì·lla seminai.
La semenza del fior v’era cascata:
Amendue insieme sì·lle mescolai,
Che molta di buon’erba n’è po’ nata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXXI Quand’i’ mi vidi in così alto grado,
Tutti i mie’ benfattori ringraziai,
E più gli amo og[g]i ch’i’ non feci mai,
Che molto si penãr di far mi’ grado.
Al Die d’Amor ed a la madre i’ bado,
E a’ baron’ de l’oste chiamo assai
D’esser lor[o] fedele a sempremai
E di servirgli e non guardar ma’ guado.
Al buono Amico e a Bellacoglienza
Rendé’ grazie mille e mille volte;
Ma di Ragion non eb[b]i sovenenza,
Che·lle mie gioie mi credette aver tolte.
Ma contra lei i’ eb[b]i provedenza,
Sì ch’i’ l’ò tutte quante avute e colte.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CCXXXII

Malgrado di Ric[c]hez[z]a la spietata,
Ch’unquanche di pietà non seppe usare,
Che del camin c[h]’à nome TroppoDare
Le pia[c]que di vietarmene l’entrata!
Ancor di Gelosia, ch’è·ssì spietata
Che dagli amanti vuole il fior guardare!
Ma pure ‘l mio non sep[p]’ella murare,
Ched i’ non vi trovasse alcuna entrata;
Ond’io le tolsi il fior ch’ella guardava:
E sì ne stava in sì gran sospez[z]one
Che·lla sua gente tuttor inveg[g]hiava.
Bellacoglienza ne tenne in pregione,
Perch’ella punto in lei non si fidava:
E sì n’er’ella don[n]a di ragione.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

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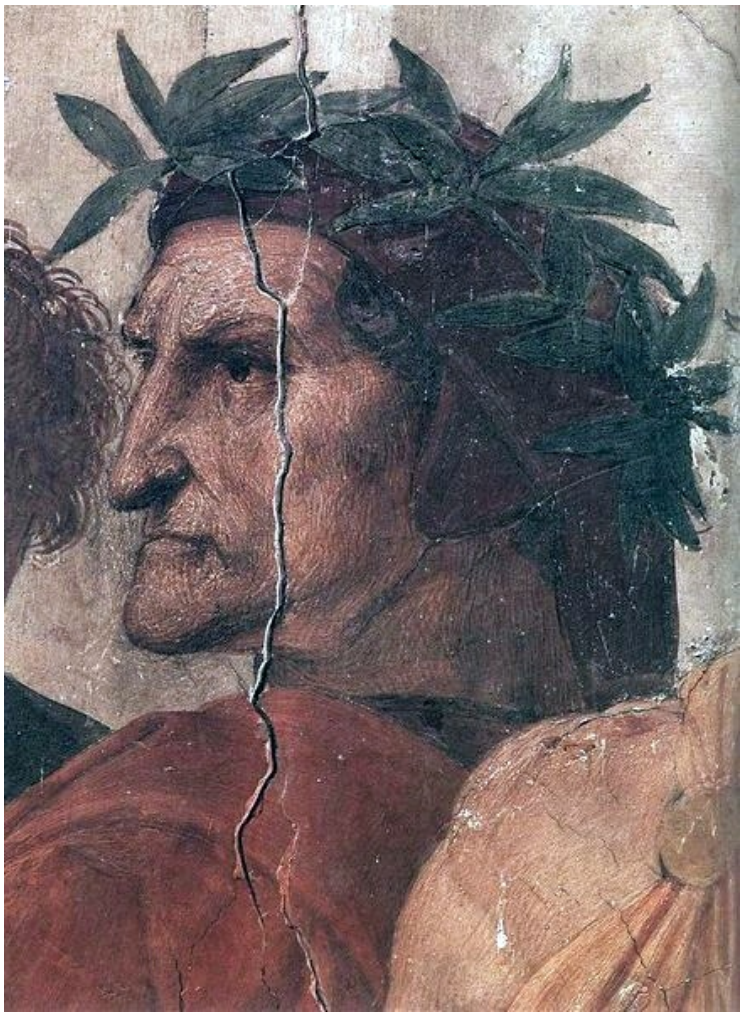
DETTO D’AMORE

Questo poemetto di 480 settenari attribuito a Dante Alighieri. Incentrato sull’amor cortese, il poemetto è in parte tratto dal Roman de la Rose, romanzo francese pubblicato nel 1280. Sembra che il poemetto dantesco sia arrivato alla contemporaneità in forma incompleta, secondo la teoria che doveva constare di 720 versi, anziché 480.

Malgrado la metrica del componimento sia semplice e consti di soli settenari a rima baciata, lo stesso metro del Tesoretto e del Favolello di Brunetto Latini, le rime sono ricercate e la lingua è quella elaborata e originale de *Il Fiore*.



La disputa, 1510

DETTO D’AMORE

Amor sì vuole e parli
ch’i’ ‘n ogni guisa parli
e ched i’ faccia un Detto,
che sia per tutto detto
ch’i’ l’aggia ben servito.
Po’ ch’e’ m’ebbe inservito
e ch’i’ gli feci omaggio,
i’ l’ho tenuto maggio
e terrò già ma’ sempre;
e questo, fin assempr’è
a ciascun amoroso,
sin c’Amor amoroso
no gli sia nella fine,
anzi, ch’e’ metta a fine
ciò ch’e’ disira avere,
che vaI me’ c’altro avere.
Ed egli è sì cortese
che chi gli sta cortese
od a man giunte avante,
esso si ‘l mette avante
di ciò ched e’ disira,
e di tutto il disir ha.
Amor non vuol logaggio,
ma e’ vuol ben lo gaggio
che ‘l tu’ cuor si’ a lu’ fermo.
Allor dice: « I’ t’affermo
di ciò che tu domandi,
sanza che tu do*n* mandi »;
e donati in presente,
sanz’esservi presente
di fino argento o d’oro.
Per ch’i’ a lui m’adoro
come leal amante.
A lu’ fo graze, amante
quella che d’ogne bene
è sì guernita bene

che ‘n le’ non truov’uon pare.
E quand’ella m’appare
sì grande gioia mi dona,
che lo me’ cor s’adona
a le’ sempre servire;
e di le’ vo’ serv’ire,
tant’ha in le’ piacimento.
Non so se piacimento
le fia ched i’ la serva:
almen può dir che serv’ha,
come ch’i’ poco vaglia.
Amor nessun non vaglia,
ma ciascun vuole ed ama,
chi di lui ben s’inama,
e di colu’ fa forza
che ‘n compiacer fa forza.
E’ non ha, in nulla, parte
Amor, in nulla part’è
ch’e’ non sia tutto presto
a fine amante presto.
Così sue cose livera
a chi l’amor non livera
e mette pene e ‘ntenza
in far sua penetenza,
tal chente Amor comanda
a chi a lu’ s’accomanda,
e chi la porta in grado
il mette in alto grado
di ciò ched e’ disìa:
Per me cotal dì sia!
Per ch’i’ già non dispero,
ma ciaschedun dì spero
merzé, po’ ‘n su’ travaglio
i’ son sanza travaglio,
e sonvi sì legato
ch’i’ non vo’ che Legato
già mai me ne prosciolga:
se n’ha altri pro’, sciolga!

Ch’i’ va’ ch’Amor m’alleghi,
che che Ragion m’alleghi:
di lei il me’ cor sicur ha,
né più di lei non cura;
ella si fa diessa:
né fu’ né fia di essa!
Amor blasma e disfama
e dice ch’e’ diffama,
ma non del mi’, certano;
perch’i’, per le’, certan ho
che ciaschedun s’abatte:
me’ ched Amor sa, batte.
Ed a me dice: « Folle,
perché così t’affolle
d’aver tal signoria?
I’ dico, signo ri’ ha
chi porta su’ suggello.
I’ per me non suggello
della sua ‘mprenta breve,
ch’è troppo corta e breve
la gioia e la noia lunga.
Or taglia’ geti, e lunga
da lui, ch’egli è di parte
che, chi da lu’ si parte,
e’ fugge e sì va via.
Or non tener sua via
se vuo’ da lu’ campare;
e se non, mal camp’ are,
che biada non vi grana,
anzi perde la grana
chiunque la vi getta.
Per Dio, or te ne getta
di quel falso diletto,
e fa che si’ a diletto
del mi’, ched egli è fine,
che dà gioia sanza fine.
Lo dio dov’hai credenza
non ti farà credenza
se non come Fortuna.

Tu se’ in gran fortuna
se non prendi buon porto
per quel ched i’ t’ho porto,
ed a me non t’apprendi
e ‘l mi’ sermone apprendi.
Or mi rispondi e dì,
ch’egli è ancor gran dì
a farmi tua risposta;
ma non mi far ri’ ‘sposta
a ciò ch’i’ ho proposato.
Di’ tu, se pro’ posat’ ho ».
E, quand’i’ ebbi intesa
Ragion, ch’è stata intesa
a trarmi de la regola
d’Amar, che ‘l mondo regola,
i’ le dissi: « Ragione,
i’ ho salda ragione
con Amar, e d’accordo
siam ben del nostro accordo,
ed è scritto a mi’ conto
ch’i’ non sia più tu’ conto.
È la ragion dannata;
perch’i’ t’ho per dannata
ed ebbi, per convento,
po’ ch’i’ fu’ del convento
d’Amor cu’ Dio mantenga,
e sempr’e’ me mantenga.
Tu mi vuo’ trar d’amare
e di’ c’Amor amar è:
i’ ‘l truova’ dolce e fine,
e su’ comincio e fine
mi piacque e piacerà,
ché’n sé gran piacer ha.
Or come vivere’ ‘o?
sanz’ Amor vive reo
chi si governa al mondo;
sanz’ Amor egli è mondo
d’ogne buona vertute
né non può far vertute;

sanz’ Amor sì è nuia,
che, con cu’ regna, en*v*ia
d’andarne dritto al luogo
là dove Envia ha *l*luogo.
E per ciò non ti credo,
se tu diciess’ il Credo
e ‘l Paternostro e l’Ave,
sì poco in te senn’ave.
Addio, ched i’ mi torno,
e fine amante torno
per devisar partita
com’ell’è ben partita
e di cors e di membra,
sì come a me mi membra ».

Cape’ d’oro battuto
paion, che m’han battuto,
quelli che porta in capo,
per ch’i’ a lor fo capo.
La sua piacente. cera
non è sembiante a cera,
anz’è sì fresca e bella
che lo me’ cor s’abbella
di non le mai affare,
tant’ha piacente affare.
La sua fronte e le ciglia
bieltà d’ogne altre *s*ciglia.
Tanto son ben voltati
che’ mie’ pensier voltati
hanno ver lei, che gioia
mi dà più c’altra gioia.
In su’ dolze riguardo
di niun mal ha riguardo
cu’ ella guarda in viso,
tant’ha piacente avviso;
ed ha sì chiara luce
ch’al sol to’ la sua luce
e lo scura e l’aluna,

sì come il sol la luna.
Perch’i’ a quella spera
ho messa la mia spera,
e sì ben co llei regno,
i’ non vogli’ altro regno.
La bocca e ‘l naso e ‘l mento
ha più belli, e non mento,
ch’unque non ebbe Alena;
ed ha più dolce alena
che nessuna pantera.
Per ch’i’ ver sua pantera
i’ mi sono ‘n fed’ito,
e dentro v’ho fedito;
ed èmmene sì preso
ched i’ vi son sì preso
che mai, di mia partita,
non mi farò partita.
La gola sua e ‘l petto
si chiar’è, ch’a Dio a petto
mi par esser la dia
ch’i’ veggio quella Dia.
Tant’è bianca e lattata,
che ma’ non fu allattata
nulla di tal valuta.
A me tropp’è valuta,
ched ella si m’ha dritto
in saper tutto ‘l dritto
c’Amor usa in sua corte,
che non v’ha legge corte.
Mani ha lunghette e braccia,
e chi co llei s’abbraccia
già mai mal non ha gotta
né di ren né di gotta:
il su’ nobile stato
si mette in buono stato
chiunque la rimira.
Per che ‘l me’ cor si mira
in lei e notte e giorno,
e sempre a lei aggiorno,

ch’ Amor si l’ha inchesto,
ned e’ non ho inchesto
se potesse aver termine,
ch’amar vorria san termine.
E quando va per via,
ciascun di lei ha ‘nvia
per l’andatura gente;
e quando parIa a gente
sì umilmente parIa
che boce d’agnol par là.
Il su’ danzar e ‘l canto
vaI vie più ad incanto
che di nulla serena,
ché l’aria fa serena:
quando la boce lieva,
ogne nuvol si lieva
e l’aria riman chiara.
Per che ‘l me’ cor si chiar’ ha
di non far già mai cambio
di lei a nessun cambio;
ch’ell’è di sì gran pregio
ch’i’ non troveria pregio
nessun, che mai la vaglia.
Amor, se Dio mi vaglia,
il terrebbe a follore,
e ben seria foll’ o re’
quand’io il pensasse punto.
Ma Amor l’ha sì a punto
nella mia mente pinta,
ch’i’ la mi veggio pinta
neI cor, s’i’ dormo o veglio.
Unque Assessino al Veglio
non fu già mai sì presto,
né a Dio mai il Presto,
com’io a servir amante,
per le vertù ch’ha mante.
E s’io in lei pietanza
truov’o d’una pietanza
deI su’ amor son contento,

i’ sarò più contento,
per la sua gran valenza,
che s’io avesse Valenza.
Se Gelosia ha ‘n sé gina
di tormene segina,
lo Dio d’amor mi mente;
ché̀d i’ ho ben a mente
ciò ched e’ m’ebbi in grado
sed i’ ‘l servisse a grado.

Ben ci ha egli un cammino
più corto; nè ‘I cammino,
per ciò ch’i’ non ho entrata
ched i’ per quell’entrata
potesse entrar un passo.
Ricchezza guarda il passo,
che non fa buona cara
a que’ che no ll’ha cara.
E sì fu’ i’ sì saggio
ched i’ ne feci saggio,
s’i’ potesse oltre gire.
«Per neente t’aggire»
mi disse, e con mal viso:
« tu se’ da me diviso,
per ciò il passo ti vieto;
non perché tu sie vieto,
ma tu non m’accontasti”
unque, ma mi contasti:
e io ciascun schifo
che di me si fa schifo.
Va’ tua via e sì procaccia,
ch’i’ so ben, chi pro’ caccia,
convien che bestia prenda.
Se fai che Veno imprenda
la guerr’a Gelosia,
come che ‘n gelo sia,
convien ch’ella si renda,
e ched ella ti renda
del servir guiderdone,

sanza che guiderdone.
Ma tuttor ti ricorde,
se ma’ meco t’accorde,
oro e argento apporta:
i’ t’aprirò la porta,
sanza che tu facci’ oste.
E si avrai ad oste
Folle-Larghezza mala,
che scioglierà la mala
e farà gran dispensa
in sale ed in dispensa
e ‘n guardarobe e ‘n cella.
Povertà è su’ ancella:
quella convien t’appanni
e che ti tragga panni
e le tue buone calze,
che già mai no lle calze,
e la camiscia e brache,
se tu co lle’ t’imbrache.
Figlia fu a Cuor-Fallito:
per Dio, guarda ‘n fall’ ito
non sia ciò ch’i’ t’ho detto
E sie con meco addetto
e mostra ben voglienza
d’aver mia benvoglienza;
ché Povertat’è insomma
d’ogne dolor la somma.
Ancor non t’ho nomato
un su’ figliuol nomato:
Imbolar uon l’appella:
chi da lu’ non s’appella,
egli ‘l mena a le forche,
là dove non ha for che
e’ monti per la scala,
dov’ogne ben gli scala,
e danza a suon di vento,
sanz’aver mai avento.
Or si t’ho letto il salmo:
ben credo a mente sa ‘l mo’,

si ‘l t’ho mostrato ad agio.
Se mai vien’ per mi’ agio,
pensa d’esser maestro
di ciò ch’i’ t’ammaestro;
che Povertà tua serva
non sia, né mai ti serva,
ché ‘1 su’ servigio è malo,
e ben può dicer « mal ho »
cu’ ella spoglia o scalza;
ché d’ogne ben lo scalza,
e mettelo in tal punto
ch’a vederlo par punto.
E gli amici e’ parenti
no gli son apparenti:
ciascun le ren gli torna
e ciascun se ne torna.
. . . . .
. . . . .
Perch’Amor m’aggia matto,
che mi tenga a matto
Ragion, cui poco amo,
già, se Dio piace, ed amo
ch’ell’aggia non m’ha crocco.
Amor m’ha cinto il crocco,
con che vuoI ched i’ tenda
s’i’ vo’ gir co llui ‘n tenda.
E dice, s’i’ balestro
se non col su’ balestro,
o s’i’ credo a Ragione
di nulla sua ragione
ch’ella mi dica o punga,
o sed i’ metto in punga
ricchezza per guardare,
o s’i’ miro in guardare,
a lui se non, ciò c’ho,
di lui non faccia co;
ma mi getta di taglia,
e dice che ‘n sua taglia
i’ non prenda ma’ soldo,

per livra né per soldo
ched i’ già ma’ gli doni.
Amor vuol questi doni:
corpo e avere e anima,
e con colui s’inanima,
chi gliel’ dà certamente
(e chi altro accerta, mente),
e sol lui per tesoro
vuol ch’uon metta ‘n tesoro.
E chi di lui è preso,
si vuoI ch’e’ sia appreso
d’ogne bell’ordinanza
che ‘l su’ bellor dinanza.
Chi ‘l cheta come dee,
si acchita ciò ch’e’ dee.

D’orgoglio vuol sie voto,
ched egli ha fatto voto
di non amarti guar’ dì
se d’orgoglio nol guardi;
ché fortemente pecca
que’ che d’orgoglio ha pecca.
Cortese e franco e pro’
convien che sie, e pro’
salute e doni e rendi:
se tu a ciò ti rendi,
d’Amor sarai in grazia,
e si ti farà grazia.
E se se’ forte e visto,
a caval sie avvisto
di punger gentemente,
si che la gente mente
ti pongan per diletto.
Non ti truovi di letto
mattino a qualche canto.
Se tu sai alcun canto,
non ti pesi il cantare
quanto pesa un cantare,
si che n’oda la nota

quella che ‘l tu’ cor nota.
Se sai giucar di lancia
prendila e sì la lancia,
e corri e sali e salta,
che troppo gente assalta:
far cosa che lor seggia,
gli mette in alta seggia.
Belle robe a podere,
secondo il tu’ podere,
vesti, fresche e novelle,
si che n’oda novelle
l’amor, cu’ tu ha’ caro
più che ‘l Soldano il Caro.
E s’elle son di lana,
sì non ti paia l’ana
a devisar l’intagli,
se tu ha’ chi gli ‘ntagli.
Nove scarpette e calze
convien che tuttor calze;
della persona conto
ti tieni; e nul mal conto
di tua bocca non s’oda,
ma ciascun pregia e loda.
Servi donne ed onora,
ché via troppo d’onor ha
chi vi mette sua ‘ntenta.
S’alcuno il diavol tenta
di lor parlare a taccia,
sì gli dì ch’e’ si taccia.
Sie largo; e, d’altra parte,
non far del tu’ cuor parte:
tutto ‘n quel luogo il metti
là dove tu l’ammetti;
ch’egli è d’Amor partito
chi ‘l su’ cuor ha partito,
ché non tien leal fino
chi va come l’alfino;
ma sol con que’ s’accorda
che ‘l su’- cammin va’ *c*corda.

Mi’ detto ancor non fino,
ché d’un amico fino
chieder, convien ti membri,
che metta cuor e membri
per te, se ti bisogna,
e ‘n ogne tua bisogna
ti sia fedele e giusto.
Ma, fé che do a San Giusto!
seminati son chiari
i buon’ amici chiari.
Ma, se ‘l truovi perfetto,
più ricco che ‘l Perfetto
sarai di sua compagna;
e s’ha bella compagna
la tua fia più sicura,
ché Veno non si cura
che non faccia far tratto,
di che l’amor è tratto.
Di lor più il fatto isveglia,
né ma’ per suon di sveglia
né per servir che faccia
nol guarda dritto in faccia
. . . . .

LE RIME

Tutte le poesie scritte da Dante e non incluse nella *Vita Nova* o nel *Convivio* (che, come vedremo, contiene tre canzoni) furono dai posteri raggruppate in un canzoniere. Esse rappresentano momenti diversi dell'esperienza artistica ed umana del Poeta. Alcune sono di argomento amoroso e sono rivolte a Beatrice o ad altre donne; altre riguardano una donna dal cuore di pietra (rime pietrose) che non acconsentì all'amore di Dante; altre sono di corrispondenza con amici poeti; altre costituiscono la famosa "tenzone" con Forese Donati; altre infine sono di argomento filosofico e morale e fanno presentire il clima spirituale della *Divina Commedia*.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Affresco nella sala Dante del Casino Massimo a Roma, da Philipp Veit, 1817-1827

I - A ciascun’alma presa e gentil core Rime della *Vita Nuova* DANTE AI FEDELI D’AMORE

A ciascun’alma presa e gentil core
nel cui cospetto ven lo dir presente,
in ciò che mi rescrivan suo parvente,
4 salute in lor segnor, cioè Amore.

Già eran quasi che atterzate l’ore
del tempo che onne stella n’è lucente,
quando m’apparve Amor subitamente,
8 cui essenza membrar mi dà orrore.

Allegro mi sembrava Amor tenendo
meo core in mano, e ne le braccia avea
11 madonna involta in un drappo dormendo.

Poi la svegliava, e d’esto core ardendo
lei paventosa umilmente pascea:
14 appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo.
[*Vita Nuova* III 10-12]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

II - Vedeste, al mio parere, onne valore Rime della *Vita Nuova* A DANTE, IN RISPOSTA AL SONETTO I

Vedeste, al mio parere, onne valore
e tutto gioco e quanto bene om sente,
se foste in prova del segnor valente
che segnoreggia il mondo de l'onore,

poi vive in parte dove noia more
e ten ragion nel casser de la mente:
sì va soave per sonni a la gente,
che i cor ne porta sanza far dolore.

Di voi lo core ne portò, veggendo
che vostra donna la morte chedea;
nodrilla de lo cor, di ciò temendo.

Quando v'appare che ne gia dogliendo,
fu dolce sonno ch'allor si compiea,
ché 'l su' contraro lo venia vincendo.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

III - Naturalmente chere ogni amadore Rime della *Vita Nuova* (O TERINO DA CASTELFIORENTINO) A DANTE IN RISPOSTA AL SONETTO I

Naturalmente chere ogni amadore
di suo cor la sua donna far saccente,
e questo per la vision presente
intese di mostrare a te l'Amore

in ciò che de lo tuo ardente core
pascea la tua donna umilemente,
che lungamente stata era dormente,
involta in drappo, d'ogne pena fore.

Allegro si mostrò Amor, venendo
a te per darti ciò che 'l cor chiedea,
insieme due coraggi comprendendo;

e l'amorosa pena conoscendo
che ne la donna conceputo avea,
per pietà di lei pianse partendo.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

IV - Di ciò che stato sei dimandatore Rime della *Vita Nuova* DANTE DA MAIANO A DANTE ALIGHIERI IN RISPOSTA AL SONETTO I

Di ciò che stato sei dimandatore,
guardando, ti rispondo brevemente,
amico meo di poco conoscente,
mostrandoti del ver lo suo sentore.

Al tuo mistier così son parlatore:
se san ti truovi e fermo de la mente,
che lavi la tua coglia largamente,
a ciò che stinga e passi lo vapore

lo qual ti fa favoleggiar loquendo;
e se gravato sei d'infertà rea,
sol c'hai farneticato, sappie, intendo.

Così riscritto el meo parer ti rendo;
né cangio mai d'esta sentenza mea,
fin che tua acqua al medico no stendo.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

V - O voi che per la via d’Amore passate

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

O voi che per la via d’Amor passate
attendete e guardate
s’elli è dolore alcun, quanto ‘l mio, grave;
e prego sol ch’audir mi sofferiate,
e poi imaginate

s’io son d’ogni tormento ostale e chiave.
Amor, non già per mia poca bontate,
ma per sua nobilitate,
mi pose in vita sì dolce e soave,
ch’io mi sentia dir dietro spesse fiate:

“Deo, per qual dignitate
così leggiadro questi lo core have?”
Or ho perduta tutta mia baldanza,
che si movea d’amoroso tesoro;
ond’io pover dimoro,

in guisa che di dir mi ven dottanza.
Sì che volendo far come coloro
che per vergogna celan lor mancanza,
di fuor mostro allegranza,
e dentro da lo core struggo e ploro.
[*Vita Nuova* VII 3-6]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

VI - Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore,
udendo qual cagion lui fa plorare.
Amor sente a Pietà donne chiamare,
mostrando amaro duol per li occhi fore,

perché villana Morte in gentil core
ha miso il suo crudele adoperare,
guastando ciò che al mondo è da laudare
in gentil donna sovra de l'onore.

Audite quanto Amor le fece orranza,
ch'io 'l vidi lamentare in forma vera
sovra la morta imagine avvenente;

e riguardava ver lo ciel sovente,
ove l'alma gentil già locata era,
che donna fu di sì gaia sembianza.
[*Vita Nuova* VIII 4-6]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

VII - Morte villana, di pietà nemica

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Morte villana, di pietà nemica,
di dolor madre antica,
giudicio incontastabile gravoso,
poi che hai data matera al cor doglioso
ond'io vado pensoso,

di te blasmar la lingua s'affatica.
E s'io di grazia ti voi far mendica,
convenesi ch'eo dica
lo tuo fallar d'onni torto tortoso,
non però ch'a la gente sia nascoso,

ma per farne cruccioso
chi d'amor per innanzi si notrica.
Dal secolo hai partita cortesia
e ciò ch'è in donna da pregiar vertute:
in gaia gioventute

distrutta hai l'amorosa leggiadria.
Più non voi discovrir qual donna sia
che per le propietà sue canosciute.
Chi non merta salute
non speri mai d'aver sua compagnia.
[*Vita Nuova* VIII 8-11]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

VIII - Cavalcando l’altr’ier per un cammin

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Cavalcando l’altr’ier per un cammino,
pensoso de l’andar che mi sgradia,
trovai Amore in mezzo de la via
in abito leggier di peregrino.

Ne la sembianza mi parea meschino,
come avesse perduto segnoria;
e sospirando pensoso venia,
per non veder la gente, a capo chino.

Quando mi vide, mi chiamò per nome,
e disse: “Io vegno di lontana parte,
ov’era lo tuo cor per mio volere;

e recolo a servir novo piacere”.
Allora presi di lui sì gran parte,
ch’elli disparve, e non m’accorsi come.
[*Vita Nuova* IX 9-12]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

IX - Ballata i’ voi che tu ritrovi Amore

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Ballata i’ voi che tu ritrovi Amore,
e con lui vade a madonna davante,
sì che la scusa mia, la qual tu cante,
ragioni poi con lei lo mio segnore.
Tu vai, ballata, sì cortesemente,

che sanza compagnia
dovresti avere in tutte parti ardire,
ma se tu vuoli andar sicuramente,
retrova l’Amor pria,
ché forse non è bon sanza lui gire;

però che quella che ti dee audire,
sì com’io credo, è ver di me adirata:
se tu di lui non fosse accompagnata,
leggeramente ti faria disnore.
Con dolce sono, quando se’ con lui,

comincia este parole,
appresso che averai chesta pietate:
“Madonna, quelli che mi manda a vui,
quando vi piaccia, vole,
sed elli ha scusa, che la m’intendiate.

Amore è qui, che per vostra bieltate
lo face, come vol, vista cangiare:
dunque perché li fece altra guardare
pensatel voi, da che non mutò ‘l core”.
Dille: “Madonna, lo suo core è stato

con sì fermata fede,
che ‘n voi servir l’ha ‘mpronto onne pensero:
tosto fu vostro, e mai non s’è smagato”.
Sed ella non ti crede,

dì che domandi Amor, che sa lo vero:

ed a la fine falle umil preghero,
lo perdonare se le fosse a noia,
che mi comandi per messo ch'eo moia,
e vedrassi ubidir ben servidore.
E dì a colui ch'è d'ogni pietà chiave,

avante che sdonnei,
che le saprà contar mia ragion bona:
"Per grazia de la mia nota soave
reman tu qui con lei,
e del tuo servo ciò che vuoi ragiona;

e s'ella per tuo prego li perdona,
fa che li annunzi un bel sembiante pace".
Gentil ballata mia, quando ti piace,
movi in quel punto che tu n'aggie onore.

[*Vita Nuova* XII 10-15]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

X - Tutti li miei penser parlan d’Amore

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Tutti li miei penser parlan d’Amore;
e hanno in lor sì gran varietate,
ch’altro mi fa voler sua potestate,
altro folle ragiona il suo valore,

altro sperando m’apporta dolzore,
altro pianger mi fa spesse fiate;
e sol s’accordano in cherer pietate,
tremando di paura che è nel core.

Ond’io non so da qual matera prenda;
e vorrei dire, e non so ch’io mi dica:
così mi trovo in amorosa erranza!

E se con tutti voi fare accordanza,
convenemi chiamar la mia nemica,
madonna la Pietà, che mi difenda.
[*Vita Nuova* XIII 8-9]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XI - Con l’altre donne mia vista gabbate

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Con l’altre donne mia vista gabbate,
e non pensate, donna, onde si mova
ch’io vi rassembri sì figura nova
quando riguardo la vostra beltate.

Se lo saveste, non poria Pietate
tener più contra me l’usata prova,
ché Amor, quando sì presso a voi mi trova,
prende baldalza e tanta securtate,

che fere tra’ miei spiriti paurosi,
e quale ancide, e qual pinge di fore,
sì che solo remane a veder vui:

ond’io mi cangio in figura d’altrui,
ma non sì ch’io non senta bene allore
li guai de li scacciati tormentosi.
[*Vita Nuova* XIV 11-12]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XII - Ciò che m’incontra, ne la mente more

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Ciò che m’incontra, ne la mente more,
quand’i’ vegno a veder voi, bella gioia;
e quand’io vi son presso, i’ sento Amore
che dice: “Fuggi, se ‘l perir t’è noia”.

Lo viso mostra lo color del core,
che, tramortendo, ovunque pò s’appoia;
e per la ebrietà del gran tremore
le pietre par che gridin: Moia, moia.

Peccato face chi allora mi vide,
se l’alma sbigottita non conforta,
sol dimostrando che di me li doglia,

per la pietà, che ‘l vostro gabbo ancide,
la qual si cria ne la vista morta
de li occhi, c’hanno di lor morte voglia.
[*Vita Nuova* XV 4-6]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XIII - Spesse fiate vegnomi a la mente

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Spesse fiate vegnomi a la mente
le oscure qualità ch'Amor mi dona,
e venmene pietà, sì che sovente
4 io dico: "Lasso!, avviene elli a persona?";

ch'Amor m'assale subitamente,
sì che la vita quasi m'abbandona:
campami un spirto vivo solamente,
8 e que' riman perché di voi ragiona.

Poscia mi sforzo, ché mi voglio atare;
e così smorto, d'onne valor voto,
11 vegno a vedervi, credendo guerire:

e se io levo li occhi per guardare,
nel cor mi si comincia uno tremoto,
14 che fa de' polsi l'anima partire.
[*Vita Nuova* XVI 7-10]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XIV - Donne ch’avete intelletto d’amore

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Donne ch’avete intelletto d’amore,
i’ vo’ con voi de la mia donna dire,
non perch’io creda sua laude finire,
ma ragionar per isfogar la mente.
Io dico che pensando il suo valore,

Amor sì dolce mi si fa sentire,
che s’io allora non perdessi ardire,
farei parlando innamorar la gente.
E io non vo’ parlar sì altamente,
ch’io divenisse per temenza vile;

ma tratterò del suo stato gentile
a respetto di lei leggeramente,
donne e donzelle amorose, con vui,
ché non è cosa da parlarne altrui.
Angelo clama in divino intelletto

e dice: “Sire, nel mondo si vede
maraviglia ne l’atto che procede
d’un’anima che ‘nfin qua su risplende”.
Lo cielo, che non have altro difetto
che d’aver lei, al suo segnor la chiede,

e ciascun santo ne grida merzede.
Sola Pietà nostra parte difende,
che parla Dio, che di madonna intende:
“Diletti miei, or sofferite in pace
che vostra spene sia quanto me piace

là ‘v’è alcun che perder lei s’attende,
e che dirà ne lo inferno: O mal nati,
io vidi la speranza de’ beati”.
Madonna è disiata in sommo cielo:

or voi di sua virtù farvi savere.

Dico, qual vuol gentil donna parere
vada con lei, che quando va per via,
gitta nei cor villani Amore un gelo,
per che onne lor pensero agghiaccia e pere;
e qual soffrisse di starla a vedere

diverria nobil cosa, o si morria.
E quando trova alcun che degno sia
di veder lei, quei prova sua vertute,
ché li avvien, ciò che li dona, in salute,
e sì l'umilia, ch'ogni offesa oblia.

Ancor l'ha Dio per maggior grazia dato
che non pò mal finir chi l'ha parlato.
Dice di lei Amor: "Cosa mortale
come esser pò sì adorna e sì pura?"
Poi la reguarda, e fra se stesso giura

che Dio ne 'ntenda di far cosa nova.
Color di perle ha quasi, in forma quale
convene a donna aver, non for misura:
ella è quanto de ben pò far natura;
per essemplo di lei bieltà si prova.

De li occhi suoi, come ch'ella li mova,
escono spirti d'amore inflammati,
che feron li occhi a qual che allor la guati,
e passan sì che 'l cor ciascun retrova:
voi le vedete Amor pinto nel viso,

là 've non pote alcun mirarla fiso.
Canzone, io so che tu girai parlando
a donne assai, quand'io t'avrò avanzata.
Or t'ammonisco, perch'io t'ho allevata
per figliuola d'Amor giovane e piana,

che là 've giugni tu diche pregando:

“Insegnatemi gir, ch’io son mandata
a quella di cui laude so’ adornata”.
E se non vuoli andar sì come vana,
non restare ove sia gente villana:

ingegnati, se puoi, d’esser palese
solo con donne o con omo cortese,
che ti merrano là per via tostana.
Tu troverai Amor con esso lei;
raccomandami a lui come tu dei.
[*Vita Nuova* XIX 4-14]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XV - Ben aggia l’amoroso e dolce core Rime della *Vita Nuova* RISPOSTA D’ANONIMO ALLA CANZONE XIV IN NOME DELLE DONNE E DELLA CANZONE

Ben aggia l’amoroso e dolce core
che vol noi donne di tanto servire,
che sua dolze ragion ne face audire,
la quale è piena di piacer piangente;
che ben è stato bon conoscidore,

poi quella dov’è fermo lo disire
nostro per donna volerla seguire,
perchè di noi ciascuna fa saccente,
ha conosciuta sì perfettamente
e ‘nclinatosi a lei col core umile;

sì che di noi catuna il dritto istile
terrà, pregando ognora dolzemente
lei cui s’è dato, quando fia con noi,
ch’abbia merzé di lui co gli atti suoi.
Ahi Deo, com’have avanzato ‘l su’ detto

partendolo da noi in alta sede!
e com’have ‘n sua laude dolce fede,
che ben ha cominzato e meglio prende!
Torto seria tal omo esser distretto
o malmenato di quella al cui pede

istà inclino, e sì perfetto crede,
dicendo sì pietoso, e non contende,
ma dolci motti parla, sì ch’accende
li cori d’amor tutti e dolci face;
sì che di noi nessuna donna tace,

ma prega Amor che quella a cui s’arrende
sia a lui umiliata in tutti lati

dov'udirà li suoi sospir gittati.
Per la vertù che parla, dritto ostelo
conoscer può ciascun ch'è di piacere,

ché 'n tutto vol quella laude compiere
c'ha cominzata per sua cortesia;
ch'unqua vista né voce sott'un velo
sì vertudiosa come 'l suo cherere
non fu ned è, per che de' om tenere

per nobil cosa ciò che dir disia:
ché conosciuta egli ha la dritta via,
sì che le sue parole son compiute.
Noi donne sem di ciò in accordo essute,
che di piacer la nostra donna tria;

e sì l'avem per tale innamorato,
ch'Amor preghiam per lui in ciascun lato.
Audite ancor quant'è di pregio e vale:
che 'n far parlare Amor sì s'assicura
che conti la bieltà ben a drittura

da lei dove 'l su' cor vol che si fova.
Ben se porta com'om naturale,
nel sommo ben disia ed ha sua cura,
né in altra vista crede né in pintura,
né non attende né vento né plova;

per che faria gran ben sua donna, po' v'ha
tanta di fé, guardare a li suoi stati;
poi ched egli è infra gl'innamorati
quel che 'n perfetto amor passa, e più gio' v'ha;
noi donne il metteremmo in paradiso,

udendol dir di lui c'ha lui conquiso.
- Io anderò, né son già miga in bando;
in tale guisa sono accompagnata,

che sì mi sento bene assicurata,
ch'i' spero andare e redir tutta sana.

Son certa ben di non irmi isviando,
ma in molti luoghi sarò arrestata:
pregherolli di quel che m'hai pregata,
fin ched i' giugnerò a la fontana
d'insegnamento, tua donna sovrana.

Non so s'io mi starò semmana o mese,
o se le vie mi sarannno contese:
girò al tu' piacer presso e lontana;
ma d'esservi già giunta io amerei,
perché ad Amor ti raccomanderei .-

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XVI - Amore e ‘l cor gentil sono una cosa

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Amore e ‘l cor gentil sono una cosa,
sì come il saggio in suo dittare pone,
e così esser l’un sanza l’altro osa
com’alma razional sanza ragione.

Falli natura quand’è amorosa,
Amor per sire e ‘l cor per sua magione,
dentro la qual dormendo si riposa
tal volta poca e tal lunga stagione.

Bieltate appare in saggia donna poi,
che piace a li occhi sì, che dentro al core
nasce un disio de la cosa piacente;

e tanto dura talora in costui,
che fa svegliar lo spirito d’Amore.
E simil face in donna omo valente.
[*Vita Nuova* XX 3-5]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XVII - Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore,
per che si fa gentil ciò ch'ella mira;
ov'ella passa, ogn'om ver lei si gira,
e cui saluta fa tremar lo core,

sì che, bassando il viso, tutto smore,
e d'ogni suo difetto allor sospira:
fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira.
Aiutatemi, donne, farle onore.

Ogne dolcezza, ogne pensero umile
nasce nel core a chi parlar la sente,
ond'è laudato chi prima la vide.

Quel ch'ella par quando un poco sorride,
non si pò dicer né tenere a mente,
sì è novo miracolo e gentile.
[*Vita Nuova* XXI 2-4]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XVIII - Voi che portate la sembianza umile

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Voi che portate la sembianza umile,
con li occhi bassi, mostrando dolore,
onde venite che ‘l vostro colore
4 par divenuto de pietà simile?

Vedeste voi nostra donna gentile
bagnar nel viso suo di pianto Amore?
Ditelmi, donne, che ‘l mi dice il core,
8 perch’io vi veggio andar sanz’atto vile.

E se venite da tanta pietate,
piacciavi di restar qui meco alquanto,
11 e qual che sia di lei, nol mi celate.

Io veggio li occhi vostri c’hanno pianto,
e veggiovi tornar sì sfigurate,
14 che ‘l cor mi triema di vederne tanto.
[*Vita Nuova* XXII 9-10]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XIX - Se’ tu colui c’hai trattato sovente

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Se’ tu colui c’hai trattato sovente
di nostra donna, sol parlando a nui?
Tu risomigli a la voce ben lui,
ma la figura ne par d’altra gente.

E perché piangi tu sì coralmente,
che fai di te pietà venire altrui?
Vedestù pianger lei, che tu non pui
punto celar la dolorosa mente?

Lascia piangere noi e triste andare
(e fa peccato chi mai ne conforta),
che nel suo pianto l’udimmo parlare.

Ell’ha nel viso la pietà sì scorta,
che qual l’avesse voluta mirare
sarebbe innanzi lei piangendo morta.
[*Vita Nuova* XXII 13-16]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XX - Donna pietosa e di novella etate

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Donna pietosa e di novella etate,
adorna assai di gentilezze umane,
ch'era là 'v'io chiamava spesso Morte,
veggendo li occhi miei pien di pietate,
e ascoltando le parole vane,

si mosse con paura a pianger forte.
E altre donne, che si fuoro accorte
di me per quella che meco piangia,
fecer lei partir via,
e appressarsi per farmi sentire.

Qual dicea: "Non dormire",
e qual dicea: "Perché sì ti sconforte?"
Allor lassai la nova fantasia,
chiamando il nome de la donna mia.
Era la voce mia sì dolorosa

e rotta sì da l'angoscia del pianto,
ch'io solo intesi il nome nel mio core;
e con tutta la vista vergognosa
ch'era nel viso mio giunta cotanto,
mi fece verso lor volgere Amore.

Elli era tale a veder mio colore,
che facea ragionar di morte altrui:
"Deh, consoliam costui"
pregava l'una l'altra umilemente;
e dicevan sovente:

"Che vedestù, che tu non hai valore?"
E quando un poco confortato fui,
io dissi: "Donne, dicerollo a vui.
Mentr'io pensava la mia frale vita,

e vedea ‘l suo durar com’è leggiero,

piansemi Amor nel core, ove dimora;
per che l’anima mia fu sì smarrita,
che sospirando dicea nel pensero:
- Ben converrà che la mia donna mora -.
Io presi tanto smarrimento allora,

ch’io chiusi li occhi vilmente gravati,
e furon sì smagati
li spirti miei, che ciascun giva errando;
e poscia imaginando,
di caunoscenza e di verità fora,

visi di donne m’apparver crucciati,
che mi dicean pur: - Morra’ti, morra’ti -.
Poi vidi cose dubitose molte,
nel vano imaginare ov’io entrai;
ed esser mi parea non so in qual loco,

e veder donne andar per via disciolte,
qual lagrimando, e qual traendo guai,
che di tristizia saettavan foco.
Poi mi parve vedere a poco a poco
turbar lo sole e apparir la stella,

e pianger elli ed ella;
cader li augelli volando per l’are,
e la terra tremare;
ed omo apparve scolorito e fioco,
dicendomi: - Che fai? non sai novella?

Morta è la donna tua, ch’era sì bella -.
Levava li occhi miei bagnati in pianti,
e vedea, che parean pioggia di manna,
li angeli che tornavan suso in cielo,
e una nuvoletta avean davanti,

dopo la qual gridavan tutti: “Osanna”;

e s’altro avesser detto, a voi dire’lo.
Allor diceva Amor: - Più nol ti celo;
vieni a veder nostra donna che giace -.
Lo imaginar fallace

mi condusse a veder madonna morta;
e quand’io l’avea scorta,
vedea che donne la covrian d’un velo;
ed avea seco umiltà verace,
che parea che dicesse: - Io sono in pace -.

Io divenia nel dolor sì umile,
veggendo in lei tanta umiltà formata,
ch’io dicea: - Morte, assai dolce ti tegno;
tu dei omai esser cosa gentile,
poi che tu se’ ne la mia donna stata,

e dei aver pietate e non disdegno.
Vedi che sì desideroso vegno
d’esser de’ tuoi, ch’io ti somiglio in fede.
Vieni, ché ‘l cor te chiede -.
Poi mi partia, consumato ogne duolo;

e quand’io era solo,
dicea, guardando verso l’alto regno:
- Beato, anima bella, chi te vede! -
Voi mi chiamaste allor, vostra merzede”.

[*Vita Nuova* XXIII 17-28]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXI - Io mi senti’ svegliar dentro a lo core

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Io mi senti’ svegliar dentro a lo core
un spirito amoroso che dormia:
e poi vidi venir da lungi Amore
allegro sì, che appena il conoscia,

dicendo: “Or pensa pur di farmi onore”;
e ‘n ciascuna parola sua ridia.
E poco stando meco il mio segnore,
guardando in quella parte onde venia,

io vidi monna Vanna e monna Bice
venire inver lo loco là ‘v’io era,
l’una appresso de l’altra maraviglia;

e sì come la mente mi ridice,
Amor mi disse: “Quell’è Primavera,
e quell’ha nome Amor, sì mi somiglia”.
[*Vita Nuova* XXIV 7-9]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXII - Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare
la donna mia quand'ella altrui saluta,
ch'ogne lingua deven tremando muta,
4 e li occhi no l'ardiscon di guardare.

Ella si va, sentendosi laudare,
benignamente d'umiltà vestuta;
e par che sia una cosa venuta
8 da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare.

Mostrasi sì piacente a chi la mira,
che dà per li occhi una dolcezza al core,
11 che 'ntender no la può chi no la prova:

e par che de la sua labbia si mova
un spirito soave pien d'amore,
14 che va dicendo a l'anima: Sospira.
[*Vita Nuova* XXVI 5-7]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XXIII - Vede perfettamente onne salute

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Vede perfettamente onne salute
chi la mia donna tra le donne vede;
quelle che vanno con lei son tenute
di bella grazia a Dio render merzede.

E sua bieltate è di tanta vertute,
che nulla invidia a l'altre ne procede,
anzi la face andar seco vestute
di gentilezza, d'amore e di fede.

La vista sua fa onne cosa umile;
e non fa sola sé parer piacente,
ma ciascuna per lei riceve onore.

Ed è ne li atti suoi tanto gentile,
che nessun la si può recare a mente,
che non sospiri in dolcezza d'amore.
[*Vita Nuova* XXVI 10-13]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XXIV - Sì lungiamente m’ha tenuto Amore Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Sì lungiamente m’ha tenuto Amore
e costumato a la sua segnoria,
che sì com’elli m’era forte in pria,
così mi era soave ora nel core.
Però quando mi tolle sì ‘l valore,

che li spiriti par che fuggan via,
allor sente la frale anima mia
tanta dolcezza, che ‘l viso ne smore,
poi prende Amore in me tanta vertute,
che fa li miei spiriti gir parlando,

ed escon for chiamando
la donna mia, per darmi più salute.
Questo m’avvene ovunque ella mi vede,
e sì è cosa umil, che nol si crede.
[*Vita Nuova* XXVII 3-5]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXV - Li occhi dolenti per pietà del core

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Li occhi dolenti per pietà del core
hanno di lagrimar sofferta pena,
sì che per vinti son remasi omai.
Ora, s’i’ voglio sfogar lo dolore,
che a poco a poco a la morte mi mena,

convenemi parlar traendo guai.
E perché me ricorda ch’io parlai
de la mia donna, mentre che vivia,
donne gentili, volentier con vui,
non voi parlare altrui,

se non a cor gentil che in donna sia;
e dicerò di lei piangendo, pui
che si n’è gita in ciel subitamente,
e ha lasciato Amor meco dolente.
Ita n’è Beatrice in alto cielo,

nel reame ove li angeli hanno pace,
e sta con loro, e voi, donne, ha lassate:
no la ci tolse qualità di gelo
né di calore, come l’altre face,
ma solo fue sua gran benignitate;

ché luce de la sua umilitate
passò li cieli con tanta vertute,
che fé maravigliar l’etterno sire,
sì che dolce disire
lo giunse di chiamar tanta salute;

e fella di qua giù a sé venire,
perché vedea ch’esta vita noiosa
non era degna di sì gentil cosa.
Partissi de la sua bella persona

piena di grazia l’anima gentile,

ed èssi gloriosa in loco degno.
Chi no la piange, quando ne ragiona,
core ha di pietra sì malvagio e vile,
ch’entrar no i puote spirito benegno.
Non è di cor villan sì alto ingegno,

che possa imaginar di lei alquanto,
e però no li ven di pianger doglia:
ma ven tristizia e voglia
di sospirare e di morir di pianto,
e d’onne consolar l’anima spoglia

chi vede nel pensero alcuna volta
quale ella fue, e com’ella n’è tolta.
Dannomi angoscia li sospiri forte,
quando ‘l pensero ne la mente grave
mi reca quella che m’ha ‘l cor diviso:

e spesse fiate pensando a la morte,
venemene un disio tanto soave,
che mi tramuta lo color nel viso.
E quando ‘l maginar mi ven ben fiso,
giugnemi tanta pena d’ogne parte,

ch’io mi riscuoto per dolor ch’i’ sento;
e sì fatto divento,
che da le genti vergogna mi parte.
Poscia piangendo, sol nel mio lamento
chiamo Beatrice, e dico: “Or se’ tu morta?”;

e mentre ch’io la chiamo, me conforta.
Piange di doglia e sospirar d’angoscia
mi strugge ‘l core ovunque sol mi trovo,
sì che ne ‘ncrescerebbe a chi m’audesse:
e quale è stata la mia vita, poscia

che la mia donna andò nel secol novo,

lingua non è che dicer lo sapesse:
e però, donne mie, pur ch'io volesse,
non vi saprei io dir ben quel ch'io sono,
sì mi fa travagliar l'acerba vita;

la quale è sì 'nvilita,
che ogn'om par che mi dica: "Io t'abbandono",
veggendo la mia labbia tramortita.
Ma quel ch'io sia la mia donna il si vede,
e io ne spero ancor da lei merzede.

Pietosa mia canzone, or va piangendo;
e ritrova le donne e le donzelle
a cui le tue sorelle
erano usate di portar letizia;
e tu, che se' figliuola di tristizia,

vatten disconsolata a star con elle.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXI 8-17]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XXVI - Venite a intender li sospiri miei

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Venite a intender li sospiri miei,
oi cor gentil, ché pietà ‘l disia:
li quai disconsolati vanno via,
4 e s’e’ non fosser, di dolor morrei;

però che li occhi mi sarebber rei,
molte fiate più ch’io non vorria,
lasso!, di pianger sì la donna mia,
8 che sfogasser lo cor, piangendo lei.

Voi udirete lor chiamar sovente
la mia donna gentil, che si n’è gita
11 al secol degno de la sua vertute;

e dispregiar talora questa vita
in persona de l’anima dolente
14 abbandonata de la sua salute.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXII 5-6]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXVII - Quantunque volte, lasso!, mi rimembra

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Quantunque volte, lasso!, mi rimembra
ch'io non debbo già mai
veder la donna ond'io vo sì dolente,
tanto dolore intorno 'l cor m'assembra
la dolorosa mente,

ch'io dico: "Anima mia, ché non ten vai?
ché li tormenti che tu porterai
nel secol, che t'è già tanto noioso,
mi fan pensoso di paura forte".
Ond'io chiamo la Morte,

come soave e dolce mio riposo;
e dico: "Vieni a me " con tanto amore,
che sono astioso di chiunque more.
E' si raccoglie ne li miei sospiri
un sono di pietate,

che va chiamando Morte tuttavia:
a lei si volser tutti i miei disiri,
quando la donna mia
fu giunta da la sua crudelitate;
perché 'l piacere de la sua bieltate,

partendo sé da la nostra veduta,
divenne spirital bellezza grande,
che per lo ciclo spande
luce d'amor, che li angeli saluta,
e lo intelletto loro alto, sottile

face maravigliar, sì v'è gentile.

[*Vita Nuova* XXXIII 5-8]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXVIII - Avvegna ched el m'aggia più per tempo Rime della *Vita Nuova* A DANTE PER CONSOLARLO DELLA MORTE DI BEATRICE

Avvegna ched el m'aggia più per tempo
per voi richesto Pietate e Amore
per confortar la vostra grave vita,
non è ancor sì trapassato il tempo
che 'l mio sermon non trovi il vostro core

piangendo star con l'anima smarrita,
fra sé dicendo: "Già sete in ciel gita,
beata gioia, com chiamava il nome!
Lasso me! quando e come
veder vi potrò io visibilmente?";

sì ch'ancora a presente
vi posso fare di conforto aita.
Donque m'odite, poi ch'io parlo a posta
d'Amor, a li sospir ponendo sosta.
Noi provamo che in questo cieco mondo

ciascun si vive in angosciosa noia,
ché in onne avversità ventura 'l tira.
Beata l'alma che lassa tal pondo
e va nel cielo ov'è compiuta gioia,
gioioso 'l cor for di corrotto e d'ira!

Or donque di che 'l vostro cor sospira,
che rallegrar si de' del suo migliore?
Ché Dio, nostro signore,
volse di lei, com'avea l'angel detto,
fare il cielo perfetto.

Per nova cosa onne santo la mira,
ed ella sta davanti a la Salute
ed inver lei parla onne Vertute.

Di che vi stringe ‘l cor pianto ed angoscia,
che dovresti d’amor sopragioire,

ch’avete in ciel la mente e l’intelletto?
Li vostri spirti trapassar da poscia
per sua vertù nel ciel; tal è ‘l disire,
ch’Amor lassù li pinge per diletto.
O omo saggio, perché sì distretto

vi tien così l’affannoso pensero?
Per suo onor vi chero
ch’a l’egra mente prendiate conforto,
né aggiate più cor morto
né figura di morte in vostro aspetto:

perché Dio l’aggia locata fra i soi,
ella tuttora dimora con voi.
Conforto, già, conforto l’Amor chiama,
e Pietà priega “Per Dio, fate resto!”:
or inchinate a sì dolce preghera.

Spogliatevi di questa vesta grama,
da che voi sete per ragion richesto;
ché l’omo per dolor more e dispera.
Com voi vedresti poi la bella cera
se v’accogliesse morte in disperanza?

Di sì grave pesanza
traete il vostro core omai per Dio,
che non sia così rio
ver l’alma vostra, che ancora spera
vederla in cielo e star ne le sue braccia:

donque spene di confortar vi piaccia.
Mirate nel piacer dove dimora
la vostra donna ch’è ‘n ciel coronata;
ond’è la vostra spene in paradiso,

e tutta santa omai vostr'innamora,

contemplando nel ciel mente locata.
Lo core vostro per cui sta diviso,
che pinto tene 'n sé beato viso?
Secondo ch'era qua giù meraviglia,
così là su somiglia,

e tanto più quant'è me' conosciuta.
Come fu ricevuta
da gli angeli con dolce canto e riso,
gli spirti vostri rapportato l'hanno,
che spesse volte quel viaggio fanno.

Ella parla di voi con li beati,
e dice loro: "Mentre ched io fui
nel mondo, ricevei onor da lui,
laudando me nei suo' detti laudati".
E priega Dio, lo signor verace,

che vi conforti sì come vi piace.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XXIX - I’ vegno il giorno a te infinite volte Rime della *Vita Nuova*

A DANTE

I’ vegno il giorno a te infinite volte
e trovoti pensar troppo vilmente:
molto mi dol de la gentil tua mente
e d’assai tue vertù che ti son tolte.

Solevanti spiacer persone molte,
tuttor fuggivi l’annoiosa gente;
di me parlavi sì coralmente,
che tutte le tue rime avie ricolte.

Or non ardisco per la vil tua vita
far mostramento che tuo dir mi piaccia,
né in guisa vegno a te che tu mi veggi.

Se ‘l presente sonetto spesso leggi,
lo spirito noioso che t’incaccia
si partirà da l’anima invilita.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXX - Era venuta ne la mente mia Rime della *Vita Nuova* “Primo cominciamento”

Era venuta ne la mente mia
la gentil donna che per suo valore fu posta da l’altissimo signore nel ciel de l’umiltate, ov’è Maria.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXIV 7]
“Secondo cominciamento”

Era venuta ne la mente mia
quella donna gentil che piange Amore,
entro ‘n quel punto che lo suo valore
4 vi trasse a riguardar quel ch’eo facia.

Amor, che ne la mente la sentia,
s’era svegliato nel destrutto core,
e diceva a’ sospiri: “Andate fore”;
8 per che ciascun dolente si partia.

Piangendo uscivan for de lo mio petto
con una voce che sovente mena
11 le lagrime dogliose a li occhi tristi.

Ma quei che n’uscian for com maggior pena,
venian dicendo: “Oi nobile intelletto,
14 oggi fa l’anno che nel ciel salisti”.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXIV 8-11]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXI - Videro li occhi miei quanta pietate

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Videro li occhi miei quanta pietate
era apparita in la vostra figura
quando guardaste li atti e la statura
ch'io faccio per dolor molte fiate.

Allor m'accorsi che voi pensavate
la qualità de la mia vita oscura,
sì che mi giunse ne lo cor paura
di dimostrar con li occhi mia viltate.

E tolsimi dinanzi a voi, sentendo
che si movean le lagrime del core,
ch'era sommosso da la vostra vista.

Io dicea poscia ne l'anima trista:
"Ben è con quella donna quello Amore
lo qual mi face andar così piangendo".
[*Vita Nuova* XXXV 5-8]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XXXII - Color d’amore e di pietà sembianti

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Color d’amore e di pietà sembianti
non preser mai così mirabilmente
viso di donna, per veder sovente
4 occhi gentili o dolorosi pianti,

come lo vostro, qualora davanti
vedetevi la mia labbia dolente;
sì che per voi mi ven cosa a la mente,
8 ch’io temo forte non lo cor si schianti.

Eo non posso tener li occhi distrutti
che non reguardin voi spesse fiate,
11 per desiderio di pianger ch’elli hanno:

e voi crescete sì lor volontate,
che de le voglia si consuman tutti;
14 ma lagrimar dinanzi a voi non sanno.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXVI 4-5]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXIII - “L’amaro lagrimar che voi faceste

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

“L’amaro lagrimar che voi faceste,
oi occhi miei, così lunga stagione,
facea lagrimar l’altre persone
de la pietate, come voi vedeste.

Ora mi par che voi l’obliereste,
s’io fosse dal mio lato sì fellone,
ch’i’ non ven disturbasse ogne cagione,
membrandovi colei cui voi piangeste.

La vostra vanità mi fa pensare,
e spaventami sì, ch’io temo forte
del viso d’una donna che vi mira.

Voi non dovreste mai, se non per morte,
la vostra donna, ch’è morta, obliare”.
Così dice ‘l meo core, e poi sospira.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXVII 6-8]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXIV - Gentil pensero che parla di vui

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Gentil pensero che parla di vui
sen vene a dimorar meco sovente,
e ragiona d’amor sì dolcemente,
che face consentir lo core in lui.

L’anima dice al cor: “Chi è costui,
che vene a consolar la nostra mente,
ed è la sua vertù tanto possente,
ch’altro penser non lascia star con nui?”

Ei le risponde: “Oi anima pensosa,
questi è uno spiritel novo d’amore,
che reca innanzi me li suoi desiri;

e la sua vita, e tutto ‘l suo valore,
mosse de li occhi di quella pietosa
che si turbava de’ vostri martiri “.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXVIII 8-10]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXV - Lasso! per forza di molti sospiri

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Lasso! per forza di molti sospiri,
che nascon de’ penser che son nel core,
li occhi son vinti, e non hanno valore
di riguardar persona che li miri.

E fatti son che paion due disiri
di lagrimare e di mostrar dolore,
e spesse volte piangon sì, ch’Amore
li ‘ncerchia di corona di martìri.

Questi penseri, e li sospir ch’eo gitto,
diventan ne lo cor sì angosciosi,
ch’Amor vi tramortisce, sì lien dole;

però ch’elli hanno in lor li dolorosi
quel dolce nome di madonna scritto,
e de la morte sua molte parole.
[*Vita Nuova* XXXIX 8-10]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXVI - Deh peregrini che pensosi andate

Rime della *Vita Nuova*

Deh peregrini che pensosi andate,
forse di cosa che non v'è presente,
venite voi da sì lontana gente,
com'a la vista voi ne dimostrate,

che non piangete quando voi passate
per lo suo mezzo la città dolente,
come quelle persone che neente
par che 'ntendesser la sua gravitate?

Se voi restaste per volerlo audire,
certo lo cor de' sospiri mi dice
che lagrimando n'uscireste pui.

Ell'ha perduta la sua beatrice;
e le parole ch'om di lei pò dire
hanno vertù di far piangere altrui.
[*Vita Nuova* XL 9-10]

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XXXVII - Oltre la spera che più larga gira

Rime della *Vita Nuova*
Oltre la spera che più larga gira
passa ‘l sospiro ch’esce del mio core:
intelligenza nova, che l’Amore
piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.

Quand’elli è giunto là dove disira,
vede una donna, che riceve onore,
e luce sì, che per lo suo splendore
lo peregrino spirito la mira.

Vedela tal, che quando ‘l mi ridice,
io no lo intendo, sì parla sottile
al cor dolente, che lo fa parlare.

So io che parla di quella gentile,
però che spesso ricorda Beatrice,
sì ch’io lo ‘ntendo ben, donne mie care.
[*Vita Nuova* XLI 10-13]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXVIII - Dante Allaghier, Cecco, ‘l tu’ servo e amico Rime della *Vita Nuova* A DANTE A PROPOSITO DEL SONETTO XXXVII

Dante Allaghier, Cecco, ‘l tu’ servo e amico,
si raccomanda a te com’a segnore:
e sì ti prego per lo dio d’amore,
lo qual è stato un tu’ signor antico,

che mi perdoni s’i’ spiacer ti dico,
ché mi dà sicurtà ‘l tu’ gentil core:
quel ch’i’ ti dico è di questo tenore,
ch’al tu’ sonetto in parte contradico.

Ch’al meo parer, ne l’una muta dice
che non intendi su’ sottil parlare,
a que’ che vide la tua Beatrice;

e puoi hai detto a le tue donne care
che tu lo ‘ntendi; e dunque contradice
a se medesmo questo tu’ trovare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XXXIX - **Provedi, saggio, ad esta visione** Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova DANTE DA MAIANO A DIVERSI RIMATORI

Provedi, saggio, ad esta visione,
e per mercé ne trai vera sentenza.
Dico: una donna di bella fazone,
di cu' el meo cor gradir molto s'agenza,

mi fé d'una ghirlanda donagione,
verde, fronzuta, con bella accoglienza:
appresso mi trovai per vestigione
camicia di suo dosso, a mia parvenza.

Allor di tanto, amico, mi francai,
che dolcemente presila abbracciare:
non si contese, ma ridea la bella.

Così, ridendo, molto la baciai:
del più non dico, che mi fé giurare.
E morta, ch'è mia madre, era con ella.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XL - Savete giudicar vostra ragione

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

RISPOSTA DI DANTE ALIGHIERI

Savete giudicar vostra ragione,
o om che pregio di saver portate;
per che, vitando aver con voi quistione,
com so respondo a le parole ornate.

Disio verace, u' rado fin si pone,
che mosse di valore o di bieltate,
imagina l'amica oppinione
significasse il don che pria narrate.

Lo vestimento, aggiate vera spene
che fia, da lei cui disiate, amore:
e 'n ciò provide vostro spirto bene;

dico, pensando l'ovra sua d'allore.
La figura che già morta sorvene
è la fermezza ch'averà nel core.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLI - Per pruova di saper com vale o quanto Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

1. DANTE DA MAIANO A DANTE ALIGHIERI

Per pruova di saper com vale o quanto
lo mastro l'oro, adducelo a lo foco;
e, ciò faccendo, chiara e sa se poco,
amico, di pecunia vale o tanto.

Ed eo, per levar prova del meo canto,
l'adduco a voi, cui paragone voco
di ciascun c'have in canoscenza loco,
o che di pregio porti loda o vanto.

E chero a voi col meo canto più saggio
che mi deggiate il dol maggio d'Amore
qual'è, per vostra scienza, nominare:

e ciò non movo per quistioneggiare
(ché già inver voi so non avria valore),
ma per saver ciò ch'eo vaglio e varraggio.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLII - Qual che voi siate, amico, vostro manto

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

2. DANTE ALIGHIERI A DANTE DA MAIANO

Qual che voi siate, amico, vostro manto
di scienza parmi tal, che non è gioco;
sì che per non saver, d'ira mi coco,
non che laudarvi, sodisfarvi tanto.

Sacciate ben (ch'io mi conosco alquanto)
che di saver ver voi ho men d'un moco,
né per via saggia come voi non voco,
così parete saggio in ciascun canto.

Poi piacevi saver lo meo coraggio,
e io 'l vi mostro di menzogna fore,
sì come quei ch'a saggio è 'l suo parlare:

certanamente a mia coscienza pare,
chi non è amato, s'elli è amadore,
che 'n cor porti dolor senza paraggio.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLIII - Lo vostro fermo dir fino ed orrato Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

3. DANTE DA MAIANO A DANTE ALIGHIERI

Lo vostro fermo dir fino ed orrato
approva ben ciò bon ch'om di voi parla,
ed ancor più, ch'ogni uom fora gravato
di vostra loda intera nominarla;

che 'l vostro pregio in tal loco è poggiato,
che propiamente om nol poria contarla:
però qual vera loda al vostro stato
crede parlando dar, dico disparla.

Dite ch'amare e non essere amato
ene lo dol che più d'Amore dole,
e manti dicon che più v'ha dol maggio:

onde umil prego non vi sia disgrato
vostro saver che chiari ancor, se vole,
se 'l vero, o no, di ciò mi mostra saggio.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLIV - Non canoscendo, amico, vostro nomo

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

4. DANTE ALIGHIERI A DANTE DA MAIANO

Non canoscendo, amico, vostro nomo,
donde che mova che non meco parla,
conosco ben ch'è scienza di gran nomo,
sì che di quanti saccio nessun par l'à;

ché si pò ben canoscere d'un omo,
ragionando, se ha senno, che ben par là;
conven poi voi laudar sanza far nomo,
è forte a lingua mia di ciò com parla.

Amico (certo sonde, acciò ch'amato
per amore aggio), sacci ben chi ama,
se non è amato, lo maggior dol porta;

ché tal dolor ten sotto suo camato
tutti altri, e capo di ciascun si chiama:
da ciò ven quanta pena Amore porta.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLV - Lasso! lo dol che più mi dole e serra Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

5. DANTE DA MAIANO A DANTE ALIGHIERI

Lasso! lo dol che più mi dole e serra
è ringraziar, ben non sapendo como;
per me più saggio converriasi, como
vostro saver, ched ogni quistion serra.

Del dol che manta gente dite s'erra
è tal voler qual voi lor non ha como;
el proprio sì disio saver dol como,
di ciò sovente, dico, essendo a serra.

Però pregh'eo ch'argomentiate, saggio,
d'autorità mostrando ciò che porta
di voi la 'mpresa, acciò che sia più chiara;

e poi parrà, parlando di ciò, chiara,
quale più chiarirem dol pena porta,
d'ello assegnando, amico, prov'e saggio.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLVI - Amor mi fa sì fedelmente amare Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova DANTE DA MAIANO A DANTE ALIGHIERI

Amor mi fa sì fedelmente amare
e sì distretto m'have en suo disire,
che solo un'ora non poria partire
lo core meo da lo suo pensare.

D'Ovidio ciò mi son miso a provare
che disse per lo mal d'Amor guarire,
e ciò ver me non val mai che mentire;
per ch'eo mi rendo a sol merzé chiamare.

E ben conosco omai veracemente
che 'nverso Amor non val forza ned arte,
ingegno né leggenda ch'omo trovi,

mai che merzede ed esser sofferente
e ben servir; così n'have omo parte.
Provedi, amico saggio, se l'approvi.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLVII - Savere e cortesia, ingegno ed arte Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova RISPOSTA DI DANTE ALIGHIERI A DANTE DA MAIANO

Savere e cortesia, ingegno ed arte,
nobilitate, bellezza e riccore,
fortezza e umiltate e largo core,
prodezza ed eccellenza, giunte e sparte,

este grazie e vertuti in onne parte
con lo piacer di lor vincono Amore:
una più ch'altra ben ha più valore
inverso lui, ma ciascuna n'ha parte.

Onde se voli, amico, che ti vaglia
vertute naturale od accidente,
con lealtà in piacer d'Amor l'adovra,

e non a contastar sua graziosa ovra;
ché nulla cosa gli è incontro possente,
volendo prender om con lui battaglia.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

XLVIII - Se Lippo amico se’ tu che mi leggi Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova A LIPPO (PASCI DEI BARDI?) PER ACCOMPAGNARGLI LA STANZA CHE SEGUE

Se Lippo amico se’ tu che mi leggi,
davanti che proveggi
a le parole che dir ti prometto,
da parte di colui che mi t’ha scritto
in tua balia mi metto

e recoti salute quali eleggi.
Per tuo onor audir prego mi deggi
e con l’udir richeggi
ad ascoltar la mente e lo ‘ntelletto:
io che m’appello umile sonetto,

davanti al tuo cospetto
vegno, perché al non caler [non] feggi.
Lo qual ti guido esta pulcella nuda,
che ven di dietro a me sì vergognosa,
ch’a torno gir non osa,

perch’ella non ha vesta in che si chiuda:
e priego il gentil cor che ‘n te riposa
che la rivesta e tegnala per druda,
sì che sia conosciuda
e possa andar là ‘vunque è disiosa.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XLIX - Lo meo servente core Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Lo meo servente core
vi raccomandi Amor, [che] vi l’ha dato,
e Merzé d’altro lato
di me vi rechi alcuna rimembranza;
ché del vostro valore

avanti ch’io mi sia guari allungato,
mi tien già confortato
di ritornar la mia dolce speranza.
Deo, quanto fie poca addimoranza,
secondo il mio parvente!

ché mi volge sovente
la mente per mirar vostra sembianza:
per che ne lo meo gire e addimorando,
gentil mia donna, a voi mi raccomando.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

L - La dispietata mente, che pur mira

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

La dispietata mente, che pur mira
di retro al tempo che se n'è andato,
da l'un de' lati mi combatte il core;
e 'l disio amoroso, che mi tira
ver lo dolce paese c'ho lasciato,

d'altra part'è con la forza d'Amore;
né dentro i' sento tanto di valore
che lungiamente i' possa far difesa,
gentil madonna, se da voi non vene:
però, se a voi convene

ad iscampo di lui mai fare impresa,
piacciavi di mandar vostra salute,
che sia conforto de la sua virtute.
Piacciavi, donna mia, non venir meno
a questo punto al cor che tanto v'ama,

poi sol da voi lo suo soccorso attende;
ché buon signor già non ristringe freno
per soccorrer lo servo quando 'l chiama,
ché non per lui, ma per suo onor difende.
E certo la sua doglia più m'incende,

quand'i' mi penso ben, donna, che vui
per man d'Amor là entro pinta sete:
così e voi dovete
vie maggiormente aver cura di lui;
ché que' da cui convien che 'l ben s'appari,

per l'imagine sua ne tien più cari.
Se dir voleste, dolce mia speranza,
sacciate che l'attender io non posso;
ch'i' sono al fine de la mia possanza.

E ciò conoscer voi dovete, quando

l’ultima speme a cercar mi son mosso;
ché tutti incarchi sostenere a dosso
de’ l’uomo infin al peso ch’è mortale,
prima che ‘l suo maggiore amico provi,
poi non sa qual lo trovi:

e s’elli avven che li risponda male,
cosa non è che costi tanto cara,
che morte n’ha più tosto e più amara.
E voi pur sete quella ch’io più amo,
e che far mi potete maggior dono,

e ‘n cui la mia speranza più riposa;
che sol per voi servir la vita bramo,
e quelle cose che a voi onor sono
dimando e voglio; ogni altra m’è noiosa.
Dar mi potete ciò ch’altri non m’osa,

ché ‘l sì e ‘l no di me in vostra mano
ha posto Amore; ond’io grande mi tegno.
La fede ch’eo v’assegno
muove dal portamento vostro umano;
ché ciascun che vi mira, in veritate

di fuor conosce che dentro è pietate.
Dunque vostra salute omai si mova,
e vegna dentro al cor, che lei aspetta,
gentil madonna, come avete inteso:
ma sappia che l’entrar di lui si trova

serrato forte da quella saetta
ch’Amor lanciò lo giorno ch’i’ fui preso;
per che l’entrare a tutt’altri è conteso,
fuor ch’a’ messi d’Amor, ch’aprir lo sanno
per volontà de la vertù che ‘l serra:

onde ne la mia guerra

la sua venuta mi sarebbe danno,
sed ella fosse sanza compagnia
de’ messi del signor che m’ha in balia.
Canzone, il tuo cammin vuol esser corto;

ché tu sai ben che poco tempo omai
puote aver luogo quel per che tu vai.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LI - Non mi poriano già mai fare ammenda

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Non mi poriano già mai fare ammenda
del lor gran fallo gli occhi miei sed elli
non s’accecasser, poi la Garisenda
torre miraro co’ risguardi belli,

e non conobber quella (mal lor prenda!)
ch’è la maggior de la qual si favelli:
però ciascun di lor voi che m’intenda
che già mai pace non farò con elli;

poi tanto furo, che ciò che sentire
doveano a ragion senza veduta,
non conobber vedendo; onde dolenti

son li miei spirti per lo lor fallire,
e dico ben, se ‘l voler non mi muta,
ch’eo stesso li uccidrò que’ scanoscenti!

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LII - Guido, i’ vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

DANTE A

, i’ vorrei che tu e ed io
fossimo presi per incantamento
e messi in un vasel, ch’ad ogni vento
per mare andasse al voler vostro e mio;

sì che fortunal od altro tempo rio
non ci potesse dare impedimento,
anzi, vivendo sempre in un talento,
di stare insieme crescesse ‘l disio.

E monna Vanna e monna Lagia poi
con quella ch’è sul numer de le trenta
con noi ponesse il buono incantatore:

e quivi ragionar sempre d’amore,
e ciascuna di lor fosse contenta,
sì come i’ credo che saremmo noi.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LIII - S’io fosse quelli che d’amor fu degno Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

RISPOSTA DI

S’io fosse quelli che d’amor fu degno,
del qual non trovo sol che rimembranza,
e la donna tenesse altra sembianza,
assai mi piaceria sì fatto legno.

E tu, che se’ de l’amoroso regno
là onde di merzé nasce speranza,
riguarda se ‘l mio spirito ha pesanza,
ch’un prest’arcier di lui ha fatto segno,

e tragge l’arco che li tese Amore,
sì lietamente, che la sua persona
par che di gioco porti signoria.

Or odi maraviglia ch’el disia:
lo spirito fedito li perdona,
vedendo che li strugge il suo valore.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LIV - Se vedi Amore, assai ti priego, Dante Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

A DANTE

Se vedi Amore, assai ti priego, Dante,
in parte là ‘ve sia presente,
che non ti gravi di por sì la mente,
che mi riscrivi s’e’ lo chiama amante,

e se la donna li sembla avenante
che si le mostr’ avvinto fortemente;
ché molte fiate così fatta gente
suol per gravezza d’amor far sembiante.

Tu sai che ne la corte là ‘ve regna
non vi può servir omo che sia vile
a donna che là entro sia renduta.

Se la soffrenza lo servente aiuta,
può di leggier cognoscer nostro sire,
lo quale porta di merzede insegna.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LV - Dante, un sospiro messaggier del core Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

A DANTE

Dante, un sospiro messaggier del core
subitamente m'assalì in dormendo,
e io mi disvegliai allor temendo
ched e' non fosse in compagnia d'Amore.

Poi mi girai, e vidi il servitore
di monna Lagia, che venia dicendo:
"Aiutami, Pietà!"; sì che piangendo
i' presi di Merzé tanto valore,

ch'i' giunsi Amore, ch'affilava i dardi.
Allor lo domandai del suo tormento;
ed elli mi rispuose in questa guisa:

"Dì al servente che la donna è prisa,
e tengola per far suo piacimento;
e se nol crede, dì ch'a li occhi guardi".

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LVI - Per una ghirlandetta

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Per una ghirlandetta
ch'io vidi, mi farà
sospirare ogni fiore.

I' vidi a voi, donna, portare
ghirlandetta di fior gentile,
e sovr'a lei vidi volare
un angiolel d'amore umile;
e 'n suo cantar sottile
dicea: "Chi mi vedrà
lauderà 'l mio signore".

Se io sarò là dove sia
Fioretta mia bella [a sentire],
allor dirò la donna mia
che port'in testa i miei sospire.
Ma per crescer disire
mia donna verrà
coronata da Amore.

Le parolette mie novelle,
che di fiori fatto han ballata,
per leggiadria ci hanno tolt'elle
una vesta ch'altrui fu data:
però siate pregata,
qual uom la canterà,
che li facciate onore.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LVII - Madonna, quel signor che voi portate Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Madonna, quel signor che voi portate
ne gli occhi, tal che vince ogni possanza,
mi dona sicuranza
che voi sarete amica di pietate;
però che là dov'ei fa dimoranza,

ed ha in compagnia molta beltate,
tragge tutta bontate
a sé, come principio c'ha possanza.
Ond'io conforto sempre mia speranza,
la qual è stata tanto combattuta,

che sarebbe perduta,
se non fosse che Amore
contro ogni avversità le dà valore
con la sua vista e con la rimembranza
del dolce loco e del soave fiore

che di novo colore
cerchiò la mente mia,
merzé di vostra grande cortesia.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LVIII - Deh, Violetta, che in ombra d’Amore Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Deh, Violetta, che in ombra d’Amore
negli occhi miei sì subito apparisti,
aggi pietà del cor che tu feristi,
che spera in te e disiando more.
Tu, Violetta, in forma più che umana,

foco mettesti dentro in la mia mente
col tuo piacer ch’io vidi;
poi con atto di spirito cocente
creasti speme, che in parte mi sana
là dove tu mi ridi.

Deh non guardare perché a lei mi fidi,
ma drizza gli occhi al gran disio che m’arde,
ché mille donne già per essere tarde
sentiron pena de l’altrui dolore.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LIX - Volgete li occhi a veder chi mi tira

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Volgete li occhi a veder chi mi tira,
per ch'i' non posso più venir con vui,
e onoratel, ché questi è colui
che per le gentil donne altrui martira.

La tua vertute, ch'ancide sanz'ira,
pregatel che mi laghi venir pui,
ed io vi dico, de li modi sui
cotanto intende quanto l'om sospira:

ch'elli m'è giunto fero ne la mente,
e pingevi una donna sì gentile,
che tutto mio valore a' piè le corre;

e fammi udire una voce sottile
che dice: "Dunque vuo' tu per neente
a li occhi tuoi sì bella donna torre?".

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LX - Deh ragioniamo insieme un poco, Amore

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Deh ragioniamo insieme un poco, Amore,
e tra'mi d'ira, che mi fa pensare;
e se vuol l'un de l'altro dilettare,
trattiam di nostra donna omai, signore.

Certo il viaggio ne parrà minore
prendendo un così dolze tranquillare,
e già mi par gioioso il ritornare,
audendo dire e dir di suo valore.

Or incomincia, Amor, ché si convene,
e moviti a far ciò ch'è la cagione
che ti dichini a farmi compagnia,

o vuol merzede o vuol tua cortesia;
ché la mia mente il mio penser dipone,
cotal disio de l'ascoltar mi vene.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXI - Sonar bracchetti, e cacciatori aizzare

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Sonar bracchetti, e cacciatori aizzare,
lepri levare, ed isgridar le genti,
e di guinzagli uscir veltri correnti,
per belle piagge volgere e imboccare

assai credo che deggia dilettare
libero core e van d'intendimenti!
Ed io, fra gli amorosi pensamenti,
d'uno sono schernito in tale affare,

e dicemi esto motto per usanza:
"Or ecco leggiadria di gentil core,
per una sì selvaggia dilettanza

lasciar le donne e lor gaia sembianza!".
Allor, temendo non che senta Amore,
prendo vergogna, onde mi ven pesanza.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXII - Com più vi fere Amor co’ suoi vincastri

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Com più vi fere Amor co’ suoi vincastri,
più li vi fate in ubidirlo presto,
ch’altro consiglio, ben lo vi protesto,
non vi si può già dar: chi vuol l’incastri.

Poi, quando fie stagion, coi dolci impiastri
farà stornarvi ogni tormento agresto,
che ‘l mal d’Amor non è pesante il sesto
ver ch’è dolce lo ben. Dunque ormai lastri

vostro cor lo cammin per seguitare
lo suo sommo poder, se v’ha sì punto
come dimostra ‘l vostro buon trovare;

e non vi disviate da lui punto,
ch’elli sol può tutt’allegrezza dare
e suoi serventi meritare a punto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXIII - Sonetto, se Meuccio t’è mostrato

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Sonetto, se Meuccio t’è mostrato,
così tosto ‘l saluta come ‘l vedi,
e va correndo e gittaliti a’ piedi,
sì che tu paie bene accostumato.

E quando se’ con lui un poco stato,
anche ‘l risalutrai, non ti ricredi;
e poscia a l’ambasciata tua procedi,
ma fa che ‘l tragghe prima da un lato;

e dì: “Meuccio, que’ che t’ama assai
de le sue gioie più care ti manda,
per accontarsi al tu’ coraggio bono”.

Ma fa che prenda per lo primo dono
questi tuo’ frati, e a lor sì comanda
che stean con lui e qua non tornin mai.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXIV - Poi che traesti infino al ferro l’arco Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova GUIDO ORLANDI IN RISPOSTA A UN SONETTO CHE GLI MANDÒ DANTE

Poi che traesti infino al ferro l’arco
ver lo stecchetto e non desti di sovra,
motto né caso volentier ti parco;
voglio cangiare a te la rima e l’ovra.

Di sì gran peso ti levasti carco,
che ben bon abachisto nol ti novra;
e s’io t’insegno passar questo varco,
sì che ‘l soverchio non vi ti discovra,

non povramente guadagnar ne voglio
anzi per rima più te ne riscriva:
e dico a te che lasci star l’orgoglio,

e t’assomigli a l’occhio de l’uliva;
e guardati di non ferire a scoglio,
colla tua nave in salvo porto arriva.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXV - De gli occhi de la mia donna si move

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

De gli occhi de la mia donna si move
un lume sì gentil, che dove appare
si veggion cose ch'uom non pò ritrare
per loro altezza e per lor esser nove:

e de' suoi razzi sovra 'l meo cor piove
tanta paura, che mi fa tremare,
e dicer "Qui non voglio mai tornare";
ma poscia perdo tutte le mie prove,

e tornomi colà dov'io son vinto,
riconfortando gli occhi paurusi,
che sentier prima questo gran valore.

Quando son giunto, lasso!, ed e' son chiusi;
lo disio che li mena quivi è stinto:
però proveggia a lo mio stato Amore.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXVI - Ne le man vostre, gentil donna mia

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Ne le man vostre, gentil donna mia,
raccomando lo spirito che more:
e’ se ne va sì dolente, ch’Amore
lo mira con pietà, che ‘l manda via.

Voi lo legaste a la sua signoria,
sì che non ebbe poi alcun valore
di poter lui chiamar se non: “Signore,
qualunque vuoi di me, quel vo’ che sia”.

Io so che a voi ogni torto dispiace;
però la morte, che non ho servita,
molto più m’entra ne lo core amara.

Gentil mia donna, mentre ho de la vita,
per tal ch’io mora consolato in pace,
vi piaccia agli occhi miei non esser cara.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXVII - E’ m’increscе di me sì duramente

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

E’ m’increscе di me sì duramente,
ch’altrettanto di doglia
lasso!, però che dolorosamente
sento contro mia voglia
raccoglier l’aire del sezza’ sospiro

entro ‘n quel cor che i belli occhi feriro
quando li aperse Amor con le sue mani
per conducermi al tempo che mi sface.
Oimè, quanto piani,
soavi e dolci ver me si levaro,

quand’elli incominciaro
la morte mia, che tanto mi dispiace,
dicendo “Nostro lume porta pace”!
“Noi darem pace al core, a voi diletto”
diceano a li occhi miei

quei de la bella donna alcuna volta;
ma poi che sepper di loro intelletto
che per forza di lei
m’era la mente già ben tutta tolta,
con le insegne d’Amor dieder la volta;

sì che la lor vittoriosa vista
poi non si vide pur una fiata:
ond’è rimasa trista
l’anima mia che n’attendea conforto,
e ora quasi morto

vede lo core a cui era sposata,
e partir la convene innamorata.
Innamorata se ne va piangendo
fora di questa vita

la sconsolata, ché la caccia Amore.

Ella si move qinci sì dolendo,
ch’anzi la sua partita
l’ascolta con pietate il suo fattore.
Ristretta s’è entro il mezzo del core
con quella vita che rimane spenta

solo in quel punto ch’ella si va via;
e ivi si lamenta
d’Amor, che fuor d’esto mondo la caccia;
e spessamente abbraccia
li spiriti che piangon tuttavia,

però che perdon la lor compagnia.
L’imagine di questa donna siede
su ne la mente ancora,
là ‘ve la pose quei che fu sua guida;
e non le pesa del mal ch’ella vede,

anzi vie più bella ora
che mai e vie più lieta par che rida;
e alza li occhi micidiali, e grida
sopra colei che piange il suo partire:
“Vanne, misera, fuor, vattene omai!”.

Questo grida il desire
che mi combatte così come sole,
avvegna che men dole,
però che ‘l mio sentire è meno assai
ed è più presso al terminar de’ guai.

Lo giorno che costei nel mondo venne,
secondo che si trova
nel libro de la mente che vien meno,
la mia persona pargola sostenne
una passion nova,

tal ch’io rimasi di paura pieno;

ch’a tutte mie virtù fu posto un freno
subitamente, sì ch’io caddi in terra,
per una luce che nel cuor percosse:
e se ‘l libro non erra,

lo spirito maggior tremò sì forte,
che parve ben che morte
per lui in questo mondo giunta fosse:
ma or ne incresce a quei che questo mosse.
Quando m’apparve poi la gran biltate

che sì mi fa dolere,
donne gentili a cu’ i’ ho parlato,
quella virtù che ha più nobilitate,
mirando nel piacere,
s’accorse ben che ‘l suo male era nato;

e conobbe ‘l disio ch’era creato
per lo mirare intento ch’ella fece;
sì che piangendo disse a l’altre poi:
“Qui giugnerà, in vece
d’una ch’io vidi, la bella figura,

che già mi fa paura;
che sarà donna sopra tutte noi,
tosto che fia piacer de li occhi suoi”.
Io ho parlato a voi, giovani donne,
che avete li occhi di bellezze ornati

e la mente d’amor vinta e pensosa,
perché raccomandati
vi sian li detti miei ovunque sono;
e ‘nnanzi a voi perdono
la morte mia a quella bella cosa

che me n’ha colpa e mai non fu pietosa.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXVIII - Lo doloroso amor che mi conduce

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Lo doloroso amor che mi conduce
a fin di morte per piacer di quella
che lo mio cor solea tener gioioso,
m’ha tolto e toglie ciascun dì la luce
che avean li occhi miei di tale stella,

che non credea di lei mai star doglioso:
e ‘l colpo suo c’ho portato nascoso,
omai si scopre per soverchia pena,
la qual nasce del foco
che m’ha tratto di gioco,

sì ch’altro mai che male io non aspetto;
e ‘l viver mio (omai esser de’ poco)
fin a la morte mia sospira e dice:
“Per quella moro c’ha nome Beatrice”.
Quel dolce nome, che mi fa il cor agro,

tutte fiate ch’i’ lo vedrò scritto
mi farà nuovo ogni dolor ch’io sento;
e de la doglia diverrò sì magro
de la persona, e ‘l viso tanto afflitto,
che qual mi vederà n’avrà pavento.

E allor non trarrà sì poco vento
che non mi meni, sì ch’io cadrò freddo;
e per tal verrò morto,
e ‘l dolor sarà scorto
con l’anima che sen girà sì trista;

e sempre mai con lei starà ricolto,
ricordando la gio’ del dolce viso,
a che niente par lo paradiso.
Pensando a quel che d’Amore ho provato,

l’anima mia non chiede altro diletto,

né il penar non cura il quale attende;
ché, poi che ‘l corpo sarà consumato,
se n’anderà l’amor che m’ha sì stretto
con lei a quel ch’ogni ragione intende;
e se del suo peccar pace no i rende,

partirassi col tormentar ch’è degna.
sì che non ne paventa;
e starà tanto attenta
d’imaginar colei per cui s’è mossa,
che nulla pena avrà ched ella senta;

sì che se ‘n questo mondo io l’ho perduto,
Amor ne l’altro men darà trebuto.
Morte, che fai piacere a questa donna,
per pietà innanzi che tu mi dis[c]igli,
va da lei, fatti dire

perchè m’avvien che la luce di quigli
che mi fan tristo, mi sia così tolta:
se per altrui ella fosse ricolta,
falmi sentire, e trarra’mi d’errore,
e assai finirò con men dolore.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXIX - Di donne io vidi una gentile schiera

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Di donne io vidi una gentile schiera
questo Ognissanti prossimo passato,
e una ne venia quasi imprimiera,
veggendosi l'Amor dal destro lato.

De gli occhi suoi gittava una lumera,
la qual parea un spirito infiammato;
e i' ebbi tanto ardir, ch'in la sua cera
guarda', [e vidi] un angiol figurato.

A chi era degno donava salute
co gli atti suoi quella benigna e piana,
e 'mpiva 'l core a ciascun di vertute.

Credo che de lo ciel fosse soprana,
e venne in terra per nostra salute:
là 'nd'è beata chi l'è prossimana.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXX - Onde venite voi così pensose?

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Onde venite voi così pensose?
Ditemel, s’a voi piace, in cortesia,
ch’i’ ho dottanza che la donna mia
non vi faccia tornar così dogliose.

Deh, gentil donne, non siate sdegnose,
né di ristare alquanto in questa via
e dire al doloroso che disia
udir de la sua donna alquante cose;

avvegna che gravoso m’è l’udire:
sì m’ha in tutto Amor da sé scacciato,
ch’ogni suo atto mi trae a ferire.

Guardate bene s’i’ son consumato,
ch’ogni mio spirto comincia a fuggire,
se da voi, donne, non son confortato.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXI - - Voi, donne, che pietoso atto mostrate

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

- Voi, donne, che pietoso atto mostrate,
chi è esta donna che giace sì venta?
sarebbe quella ch'è nel mio cor penta?
Deh, s'ella è dessa, più non mel celate.

Ben ha le sue sembianze sì cambiate,
e la figura sua mi par sì spenta,
ch'al mio parere ella non rappresenta
quella che fa parer l'altre beate.-

- Se nostra donna conoscer non poi,
ch'è sì conquisa, non mi par gran fatto,
però che quel medesmo avvenne a noi.

Ma se tu mirerai il gentil atto
de li occhi suoi, conosceraila poi:
non pianger più, tu se' già tutto sfatto.-

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXXII - Un dì si venne a me Malinconia

Altre rime del tempo della Vita Nuova

Un dì si venne a me Malinconia
e disse: “Io voglio un poco stare teco”;
e parve a me ch’ella menasse seco
Dolore e Ira per sua compagnia.

E io le dissi: “Partiti, va via”;
ed ella mi rispose come un greco:
e ragionando a grande agio meco,
guardai e vidi Amore, che venia

vestito di novo d’un drappo nero,
e nel suo capo portava un cappello;
e certo lacrimava pur di vero.

Ed eo li dissi: “Che hai, cattivello?”.
Ed el rispose: “Eo ho guai e pensero,
ché nostra donna mor, dolce fratello”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXIII - Chi udisse tossir la mal fatata

Tenzone con

1. DANTE A FORESE

Chi udisse tossir la mal fatata
moglie di Bicci vocato Forese,
potrebbe dir ch'ell'ha forse vernata
ove si fa 'l cristallo in quel paese.

Di mezzo agosto la truovi infreddata;
or sappi che de' far d'ogni altro mese!
E non le val perché dorma calzata,
merzé del copertoio c'ha cortonese.

La tosse, 'l freddo e l'altra mala voglia
no l'addovien per omor ch'abbia vecchi
ma per difetto ch'ella sente al nido.

Piange la madre, c'ha più d'una doglia,
dicendo: "Lassa, che per fichi secchi
messa l'avre' 'n casa del conte Guido!".

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXXIV - L’altra notte mi venne una gran tosse Tenzone con Forese Donati

2. FORESE A DANTE

L’altra notte mi venne una gran tosse,
perch’i’ non avea che tener a dosso;
ma incontanente che fu dì, fui mosso
per gir a guadagnar ove che fosse.

Udite la fortuna ove m’addosse:
ch’i’ credetti trovar perle in un bosso
e be’ fiorin coniati d’oro rosso;
ed i’ trovai Alaghier tra le fosse,

legato a nodo ch’i’ non saccio ‘l nome,
se fu di Salamone o d’altro saggio.
Allora mi segna’ verso ‘l levante:

e que’ mi disse: “Per amor di Dante,
scio’mi “. Ed i’ non potti veder come:
tornai a dietro, e compie’ mi’ viaggio.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXV - Ben ti faranno il nodo Salamone

Tenzone con Forese Donati

3. DANTE A FORESE

Ben ti faranno il nodo Salamone,
Bicci novello, e petti de le starne,
ma peggio fia la la lonza del castrone,
ché ‘l cuoio farà vendetta de la carne;

tal che starai più presso a San Simone,
se tu non ti procacci de l’andarne:
e ‘ntendi che ‘l fuggire el mal boccone
sarebbe oramai tardi a ricomprarne.

Ma ben m’è detto che tu sai un’arte,
che, s’egli è vero, tu ti puoi rifare,
però ch’ell’è di molto gran guadagno;

e fa sì a tempo, che tema di carte
non hai, che ti bisogni scioperare;
ma ben ne colse male a’ fi’ di Stagno.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXVI - Va, rivesti San Gal prima che dichi Tenzone con Forese Donati

4. FORESE A DANTE

Va, rivesti San Gal prima che dichi
parole o motti d'altrui povertate,
ché troppo n'è venuta gran pietate
in questo verno a tutti suoi amichi.

E anco, se tu n'hai per sì mendichi,
perché pur mandi a noi per caritate?
Dal castello Altrafonte ha' ta' grembiate,
ch'io saccio ben che tu te ne nutrichi.

Ma ben t'alenerà il lavorare,
se Dio ti salvi la Tana e 'l Francesco,
che col Belluzzo tu non stia in brigata.

A lo spedale a Pinti ha' riparare;
e già mi par vedere stare a desco,
ed in terzo, Alighier co la farsata.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXXVII - Bicci novel, figliuol di non so cui

Tenzone con Forese Donati

5. DANTE A FORESE

Bicci novel, figliuol di non so cui,
s'i' non ne domandasse monna Tessa,
giù per la gola tanta roba hai messa,
ch'a forza ti convien torre l'altrui.

E già la gente si guarda da lui,
chi ha borsa a lato, là dov'e' s'appressa,
dicendo: "Questi c'ha la faccia fessa
è piuvico ladron negli atti sui".

E tal giace per lui nel letto tristo,
per tema non sia preso a lo 'mbolare,
che gli appartien quanto Giosepp'a Cristo.

Di Bicci e de' fratei posso contare
che, per lo sangue lor, del male acquisto
sanno a lor donne buon cognati stare.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXXVIII - Ben so che fosti figliuol d'Alaghieri Tenzone con Forese Donati

6. FORESE A DANTE

Ben so che fosti figliuol d'Alaghieri,
e accorgomene pur a la vendetta
che facesti di lui sì bella e netta
de l'aguglin ched e' cambiò l'altr'ieri.

Se tagliato n'avessi uno a quartieri,
di pace non dovevi aver tal fretta;
ma tu ha' poi sì piena la bonetta,
che non la porterebber due somieri.

Buon uso ci ha' recato, ben til dico,
che qual ti carica ben di bastone,
colui ha' per fratello e per amico.

Il nome ti direi de le persone
che v'hanno posto su; ma del panico
mi reca, ch'i' vo' metter la ragione.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXXIX - Voi che ‘ntendendo il terzo ciel movete

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

Voi che ‘ntendendo il terzo ciel movete,
udite il ragionar ch’è nel mio core,
ch’io nol so dire altrui, sì mi par novo.
El ciel che segue lo vostro valore,
gentili creature che voi sete,

mi tragge ne lo stato ov’io mi trovo.
Onde ‘l parlar de la vita ch’io provo,
par che si drizzi degnamente a vui:
però vi priego che lo mi ‘ntendiate.
Io vi dirò del cor la novitate,

come l’anima trista piange in lui,
e come un spirto contra lei favella,
che vien pe’ raggi de la vostra stella.
Suol esser vita de lo cor dolente
un soave penser, che se ne gia

molte fiate a’ pie’ del nostro Sire,
ove una donna gloriar vedia,
di cui parlava me sì dolcemente
che l’anima dicea: “Io men vo’ gire”.
Or apparisce chi lo fa fuggire

e segnoreggia me di tal virtute,
che ‘l cor ne trema che di fuori appare.
Questi mi face una donna guardare,
e dice: “Chi veder vuol la salute,
faccia che li occhi d’esta donna miri,

sed e’ non teme angoscia di sospiri”.
Trova contraro tal che lo distrugge
l’umil pensero, che parlar mi sole
d’un’angela che ‘n cielo è coronata.
L’anima piange, sì ancor len dole,

e dice: “Oh lassa me, come si fugge

questo piatoso che m’ha consolata!”
De li occhi miei dice questa affannata:
“Qual ora fu che tal donna li vide!
e perché non credeano a me di lei?

Io dicea: ‘Ben ne li occhi di costei
de’ star colui che le mie pari ancide!’
E non mi valse ch’io ne fossi accorta
che non mirasser tal, ch’io ne son morta”.
“Tu non se’ morta, ma se’ ismarrita,

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXX - Voi che savete ragionar d’Amore

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

Voi che savete ragionar d’Amore,
udite la ballata mia pietosa,
che parla d’una donna disdegnosa,
la qual m’ha tolto il cor per suo valore.
Tanto disdegna qualunque la mira,

che fa chinare gli occhi di paura,
però che intorno a’ suoi sempre si gira
d’ogni crudelitate una pintura;
ma dentro portan la dolze figura
ch’a l’anima gentil fa dir: “Merzede!”,

sì vertuosa, che quando si vede,
trae li sospiri altrui fora del core.
Par ch’ella dica: “Io non sarò umile
verso d’alcun che ne li occhi mi guardi,
ch’io ci porto entro quel segnor gentile

che m’ha fatto sentir de li suoi dardi”.
E certo i’ credo che così li guardi
per vederli per sé quando le piace,
a quella guisa retta donna face
quando si mira per volere onore.

Io non ispero che mai per pietate
degnasse di guardare un poco altrui,
così è fera donna in sua bieltate
questa che sente Amor negli occhi sui.
Ma quanto vuol nasconda e guardi lui,

ch’io non veggia talor tanta salute;
però che i miei disiri avran vertute
contra ‘l disdegno che mi dà tremore.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXI - Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona
de la mia donna disiosamente,
move cose di lei meco sovente,
che lo ‘ntelletto sovr’esse disvia.
Lo suo parlar sì dolcemente sona,

che l’anima ch’ascolta e che lo sente
dice: “Oh me lassa! ch’io non son possente
di dir quel ch’odo de la donna mia!”
E certo e’ mi conven lasciare in pria,
s’io vo’ trattar di quel ch’odo di lei,

ciò che lo mio intelletto non comprende;
e di quel che s’intende
gran parte, perché dirlo non savrei.
Però, se le mie rime avran difetto
ch’entreran ne la loda di costei,

di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto
e ‘l parlar nostro, che non ha valore
di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore.
Non vede il sol, che tutto ‘l mondo gira,
cosa tanto gentil, quanto in quell’ora

che luce ne la parte ove dimora
la donna di cui dire Amor mi face.
Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira,
e quella gente che qui s’innamora
ne’ lor pensieri la truovano ancora,

quando Amor fa sentir de la sua pace.
Suo esser tanto a Quei che lel dà piace,
che ‘nfonde sempre in lei la sua vertute
oltre ‘l dimando di nostra natura.
La sua anima pura,

che riceve da lui questa salute,

lo manifesta in quel ch’ella conduce:
ché ‘n sue bellezze son cose vedute
che li occhi di color dov’ella luce
ne mandan messi al cor pien di desiri,

che prendon aire e diventan sospiri.
In lei discende la virtù divina
sì come face in angelo che ‘l vede;
e qual donna gentil questo non crede,
vada con lei e miri li atti sui,

Quivi dov’ella parla si dichina
un spirito da ciel, che reca fede
come l’alto valor ch’ella possiede
è oltre quel che si conviene a nui.
Li atti soavi ch’ella mostra altrui

vanno chiamando Amor ciascuno a prova
in quella voce che lo fa sentire.
Di costei si può dire:
gentile è in donna ciò che in lei si trova,
e bello è tanto quanto lei simiglia.

E puossi dir che ‘l suo aspetto giova
a consentir ciò che par maraviglia;
onde la nostra fede è aiutata:
però fu tal da etterno ordinata.
Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto

che mostran de’ piacer di Paradiso,
dico ne li occhi e nel suo dolce riso,
che le vi reca Amor com’a suo loco.
Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto,
come raggio di sole un frale viso:

e perch’io non le posso mirar fiso,
mi conven contentar di dirne poco.
Sua bieltà piove fiammelle di foco,
animate d’un spirito gentile

ch’è creatore d’ogni pensier bono;

e rompon come trono
li ‘nnati vizii che fanno altrui vile.
Però qual donna sente sua bieltate
biasmar per non parer queta e umile,
miri costei ch’è essemplo d’umiltate!

Questa è colei ch’umilia ogni perverso:
costei pensò chi mosse l’universo.
Canzone, e’ par che tu parli contraro
al dir d’una sorella che tu hai;
che questa donna che tanto umil fai

ella la chiama fera e disdegnosa.
Tu sai che ‘l ciel sempr’è lucente e chiaro,
e quanto in sé, non si turba già mai;
ma li nostri occhi per cagioni assai
chiaman la stella talor tenebrosa.

Così, quand’ella la chiama orgogliosa,
non considera lei secondo il vero,
ma pur secondo quel ch’a lei parea:
ché l’anima temea,
e teme ancora, sì che mi par fero

quantunqu’io veggio là ‘v’ella mi senta.
Così ti scusa, se ti fa mestero;
e quando poi, a lei ti rappresenta:
dirsi: “Madonna, s’ello v’è a grato,
io parlerò di voi in ciascun lato”.
[*Convivio* III]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXII - Le dolci rime d’amor ch’i’ solia

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

Le dolci rime d’amor ch’i’ solia
cercar ne’ miei pensieri,
convien ch’io lasci; non perch’io non speri
ad esse ritornare,
ma perché li atti disdegnosi e feri

che ne la donna mia
sono appariti m’han chiusa la via
de l’usato parlare.
E poi che tempo mi par d’aspettare,
diporrò giù lo mio soave stile,

ch’i’ ho tenuto nel trattar d’amore;
e dirò del valore,
per lo qual veramente omo è gentile,
con rima aspr’e sottile;
riprovando ‘l giudicio falso e vile

di quei che voglion che di gentilezza
sia principio ricchezza.
E, cominciando, chiamo quel signore
ch’a la mia donna ne li occhi dimora,
per ch’ella di se stessa s’innamora.

Tale imperò che gentilezza volse,
secondo ‘l suo parere,
che fosse antica possession d’avere
con reggimenti belli;
e altri fu di più lieve savere,

che tal detto rivolse,
e l’ultima particula ne tolse,
ché non l’avea fors’elli!
Di retro da costui van tutti quelli
che fan gentile per ischiatta altrui

che lungiamente in gran ricchezza è stata;

ed è tanto durata
la così falsa oppinion tra nui,
che l’uom chiama colui
omo gentil che può dicere; ‘Io fui

nepote, o figlio, di cotal valente’,
benché sia da niente.
Ma vilissimo sembra, a chi ‘l ver guata,
cui è scorto ‘l cammino e poscia l’erra,
e tocca a tal, ch’è morto e va per terra!

Chi diffinisce: ‘Omo è legno animato’,
prima dice non vero,
e, dopo ‘l falso, parla non intero;
ma più forse non vede.
Similmente fu chi tenne impero

in diffinire errato,
ché prima puose ‘l falso e, d’altro lato,
con difetto procede;
ché le divizie, sì come si crede,
non posson gentilezza dar né tòrre,

però che vili son da lor natura:
poi chi pinge figura,
se non può esser lei, non la può porre,
né la diritta torre
fa piegar rivo che da lungi corre.

Che siano vili appare ed imperfette,
ché, quantunque collette,
non posson quietar, ma dan più cura;
onde l’animo ch’è dritto e verace
per lor discorrimento non si sface.

Né voglion che vil uom gentil divegna,
né di vil padre scenda
nazion che per gentil già mai s’intenda;
questo è da lor confesso:

onde lor ragion par che sé offenda

in tanto quanto assegna
che tempo a gentilezza si convegna,
diffinendo con esso.
Ancor, segue di ciò che innanzi ho messo,
che siam tutti gentili o ver villani,

o che non fosse ad uom cominciamento;
ma ciò io non consento,
ned ellino altressì, se son cristiani!
Per che a ‘ntelletti sani
è manifesto i lor diri esser vani,

e io così per falsi li riprovo,
e da lor mi rimovo;
e dicer voglio omai, sì com’io sento,
che cosa è gentilezza, e da che vene,
e dirò i segni che ‘l gentile uom tene.

Dico ch’ogni vertù principalmente
vien da una radice:
vertute, dico, che fa l’uom felice
in sua operazione.
Questo è, secondo che l’Etica dice,

un abito eligente
lo qual dimora in mezzo solamente,
e tai parole pone.
Dico che nobiltate in sua ragione
importa sempre ben del suo subietto,

come viltate importa sempre male;
e vertute cotale
dà sempre altrui di sé buono intelletto;
per che in medesmo detto
convegnono ambedue, ch’en d’uno effetto.

Onde convien da l’altra vegna l’una,

o d’un terzo ciascuna;
ma se l’una val ciò che l’altra vale,
e ancor più, da lei verrà più tosto.
E ciò ch’io dett’ho qui sia per supposto.

E’ gentilezza dovunqu’è vertute,
ma non vertute ov’ella;
sì com’è ‘l cielo dovunqu’è la stella,
ma ciò non e converso.
E noi in donna e in età novella

vedem questa salute,
in quanto vergognose son tenute,
ch’è da vertù diverso.
Dunque verrà, come dal nero il perso,
ciascheduna vertute da costei,

o vero il gener lor, ch’io misi avanti.
Però nessun si vanti
dicendo: ‘Per ischiatta io son con lei’,
ch’elli son quasi dei
quei c’han tal grazia fuor di tutti rei;

ché solo Iddio a l’anima la dona
che vede in sua persona
perfettamente star: sì ch’ad alquanti
che seme di felicità sia costa,
messo da Dio ne l’anima ben posta.

L’anima cui adorna esta bontate
non la si tiene ascosa,
ché dal principio ch’al corpo si sposa
la mostra infin la morte.
Ubidente, soave e vergognosa

è ne la prima etate,
e sua persona adorna di bieltate
con le sue parti accorte;
in giovinezza, temperata e forte,

piena d’amore e di cortese lode,

e solo in lealtà far si diletta;
è ne la sua senetta
prudente e giusta, e larghezza se n’ode,
e ‘n se medesma gode
d’udire e ragionar de l’altrui prode;

poi ne la quarta parte de la vita
a Dio si rimarita,
contemplando la fine che l’aspetta,
e benedice li tempi passati.
Vedete omai quanti son l’ingannati!

Contra-li-erranti mia, tu te n’andrai;
e quando tu sarai
in parte dove sia la donna nostra,
non le tenere il tuo mestier coverto:
tu le puoi dir per certo:

“Io vo parlando de l’amica vostra”.

[*Convivio* IV]

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXIII - Poscia ch’Amor del tutto m’ha lasciato

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

Poscia ch’Amor del tutto m’ha lasciato,
non per mio grato,
ché stato non avea tanto gioioso,
ma però che pietoso
fu tanto del meo core,

che non sofferse d’ascoltar suo pianto;
i’ canterò così disamorato
contra ‘l peccato,
ch’è nato in noi, di chiamare a ritroso
tal ch’è vile e noioso

con nome di valore,
cioè di leggiadria, ch’è bella tanto
che fa degno di manto
imperial colui dov’ella regna:
ell’è verace insegna

la qual dimostra u’ la vertù dimora;
per ch’io son certo, se ben la difendo
nel dir com’io la ‘ntendo,
ch’Amor di sé mi farà grazia ancora.
Sono che per gittar via loro avere

credon potere
capere là dove li boni stanno
che dopo morte fanno
riparo ne le mente
a quei contanti c’hanno canoscenza.

Ma lor messione a’ bon non pò piacere,
perché tenere
savere fora, e fuggiriano il danno,
che si aggiugne a lo ‘nganno
di loro e de la gente

c’hanno falso iudicio in lor sentenza.

Qual non dirà fallenza
divorar cibo ed a lussuria intendere?
ornarsi, come vendere
si dovesse al mercato di non saggi?

ché ‘l saggio non pregia om per vestimenta,
ch’altrui sono ornamenta,
ma pregia il senno e li genti coraggi.
E altri son che, per esser ridenti,
d’intendimenti

correnti voglion esser iudicati
da quei che so’ ingannati
veggendo rider cosa
che lo ‘ntelletto cieco non la vede.
E’ parlan con vocaboli eccellenti;

vanno spiacenti,
contenti che da lunga sian mirati;
non sono innamorati
mai di donna amorosa;
ne’ parlamenti lor tengono scede;

non moveriano il piede
per donneare a guisa di leggiadro,
ma come al furto il ladro,
così vanno a pigliar villan diletto;
e non però che ‘n donne è sì dispento

leggiadro portamento,
che paiono animai sanza intelletto.
Ancor che ciel con cielo in punto sia,
che leggiadria
disvia cotanto, e più che quant’io conto,

io, che le sono conto
merzé d’una gentile
che la mostrava in tutti gli atti sui,
non tacerò di lei, ché villania

far mi parria

sì ria, ch’a’ suoi nemici sarei giunto:
per che da questo punto
con rima più sottile
tratterò il ver di lei, ma non so cui.
Eo giuro per colui

ch’Amor si chiama ed è pien di salute,
che sanza ovrar vertute
nessun pote acquistar verace loda:
dunque se questa mia matera è bona,
come ciascun ragiona,

sarà vertù o con vertù s’annoda.
Non è pura vertù la disviata,
poi ch’è blasmata,
negata là ‘v’è più vertù richesta,
cioè in gente onesta

di vita spiritale
o in abito che di scienza tiene.
Dunque, s’ell’è in cavalier lodata,
sarà mischiata,
causata di più cose; perché questa

conven che di sé vesta
l’un bene e l’altro male,
ma vertù pura in ciascuna sta bene.
Sollazzo è che convene
con esso Amore e l’opera perfetta:

da questo terzo retta
è vera leggiadria e in esser dura,
sì come il sole al cui esser s’adduce
lo calore e la luce
con la perfetta sua bella figura.

Al gran pianeto è tutta simigliante

che, dal levante
avante infino a tanto che s’asconde,
co li bei raggi infonde
vita e vertù qua giuso

ne la matera sì com’è disposta:
e questa, disdegnosa di cotante
persone, quante
sembiante portan d’omo, e non responde
il lor frutto a le fronde

per lo mal c’hanno in uso,
simili beni al cor gentile accosta;
ché ‘n donar vita è tosta
co’ bei sembianti e co’ begli atti novi
ch’ognora par che trovi,

e vertù per essemplo a chi lei piglia.
Oh falsi cavalier, malvagi e rei,
nemici di costei,
ch’al prenze de le stelle s’assimiglia!
Dona e riceve l’om cui questa vole,

mai non sen dole;
né ‘l sole per donar luce a le stelle,
né per prender da elle
nel suo effetto aiuto;
ma l’uno e l’altro in ciò diletto tragge.

Già non s’induce a ira per parole,
ma quelle sole
ricole che son bone, e sue novelle
sono leggiadre e belle;
per sé caro è tenuto

e disiato da persone sagge,
ché de l’altre selvagge
cotanto laude quanto biasmo prezza;
per nessuna grandezza

130 monta in orgoglio, ma quando gl’incontra

che sua franchezza li conven mostrare,
quivi si fa laudare.
Color che vivon fanno tutti contra.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXIV - Parole mie che per lo mondo siete

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

Parole mie che per lo mondo siete,
voi che nasceste poi ch’io cominciai
a dir per quella donna in cui errai
“Voi che ‘ntendendo il terzo ciel movete”.

andatevene a lei, che la sapete,
chiamando sì ch’ell’oda i vostri guai;
ditele: “Noi siam vostre, ed unquemai
più che noi siamo non ci vederete”.

Con lei non state, ché non v’è Amore;
ma gite a torno in abito dolente
a guisa de le vostre antiche sore.

Quando trovate donna di valore,
gittatelevi a’ piedi umilemente,
dicendo: “A voi dovem noi fare onore”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXV - O dolci rime che parlando andate

Rime allegoriche e dottrinali

CONTRO IL PRECEDENTE SONETTO

O dolci rime che parlando andate
de la donna gentil che l'altre onora,
a voi verrà, se non è giunto ancora,
un che direte: "Questi è nostro frate".

Io vi scongiuro che non l'ascoltiate
per quel signor che le donne innamora,
ché ne la sua sentenzia non dimora
cosa che amica sia di veritate.

E se voi foste per le sue parole
mosse a venire inver la donna vostra,
non v'arrestate, ma venite a lei.

Dite: "Madonna, la venuta nostra
è per raccomandarvi un che si dole,
dicendo: ov'è 'l disio de li occhi miei?".

Per l'indice, clicca qui

LXXXVI - Due donne in cima de la mente mia

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

Due donne in cima de la mente mia
venute sono a ragionar d’amore:
l’una ha in sé cortesia e valore,
prudenza e onestà in compagnia;

l’altra ha bellezza e vaga leggiadria,
adorna gentilezza le fa onore:
e io, merzé del dolce mio signore,
mi sto a piè de la lor signoria.

Parlan bellezza e virtù a l’intelletto,
e fan quistion come un cor puote stare
intra due donne con amor perfetto.

Risponde il fonte del gentil parlare
ch’amar si può bellezza per diletto,
e puossi amar virtù per operare.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXVII - - I’ mi son pargoletta bella e nova

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

- I’ mi son pargoletta bella e nova,
che son venuta per mostrare altrui
de le bellezze del loco ond’io fui.
I’ fui del cielo, e tornerovvi ancora
per dar de la mia luce altrui diletto;

e chi mi vede e non se ne innamora
d’amor non averà mai intelletto,
ché non mi fu in piacer alcun disdetto
quando natura mi chiese a colui
che volle, donne, accompagnarmi a vui.

Ciascuna stella ne li occhi mi piove
del lume suo e de la sua vertute;
le mie bellezze sono al mondo nove,
però che di là su mi son venute:
le quai non posson esser canosciute

se non da canoscenza d’omo in cui
Amor si metta per piacer altrui. -
Queste parole si leggon nel viso
d’un’angioletta che ci è apparita:
e io che per veder lei mirai fiso,

ne sono a rischio di perder la vita;
però ch’io ricevetti tal ferita
da un ch’io vidi dentro a li occhi sui,
ch’i’ vo’ piangendo e non m’acchetai pui.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXVIII - Perché ti vedi giovinetta e bella Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

Perché ti vedi giovinetta e bella,
tanto che svegli ne la mente Amore,
pres’hai orgoglio e durezza nel core.
Orgogliosa se’ fatta e per me dura,
po’ che d’ancider me, lasso!, ti prove:

credo che ‘l facci per esser sicura
se la vertù d’Amore a morte move.
Ma perché preso più ch’altro mi trove,
non hai respetto alcun del mi’ dolore.
Possi tu spermentar lo suo valore!

Per l’indice, clicca qui

LXXXIX - Chi guarderà già mai sanza paura

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

Chi guarderà già mai sanza paura
ne li occhi d’esta bella pargoletta,
che m’hanno concio sì, che non s’aspetta
per me se non la morte, che m’è dura?

Vedete quanto è forte mia ventura,
che fu tra l’altre la mia vita eletta
per dare essemplo altrui, ch’uom non si metta
in rischio di mirar la sua figura.

Destinata mi fu questa finita
da ch’un uom convenia esser disfatto,
perch’altri fosse di pericol tratto;

e però, lasso!, fu’ io così ratto
in trarre a me ‘l contrario de la vita,
come vertù di stella margherita.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XC - Amor, che movi tua vertù dal cielo

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

Amor, che movi tua vertù dal cielo
come ‘l sol lo splendore,
ché là s’apprende più lo suo valore
dove più nobiltà suo raggio trova;
e come el fuga oscuritate e gelo,

così, alto segnore,
tu cacci la viltate altrui del core,
né ira contra te fa lunga prova;
da te conven che ciascun ben si mova
per lo qual si travaglia il mondo tutto;

sanza te è distrutto
quanto avemo in potenzia di ben fare,
come pintura in tenebrosa parte,
che non si può mostrare
né dar diletto di color né d’arte.

Feremi ne lo cor sempre tua luce,
come raggio in la stella,
poi che l’anima mia fu fatta ancella
de la tua podestà primeramente;
onde ha vita un disio che mi conduce

con sua dolce favella
in rimirar ciascuna cosa bella
con più diletto quanto è più piacente.
Per questo mio guardar m’è ne la mente
una giovane entrata, che m’ha preso,

e hagli un foco acceso,
com’acqua per chiarezza fiamma accende;

perché nel suo venir li raggi tuoi,
con li quai mi risplende,
saliron tutti su ne gli occhi suoi.

Questo è ne l’esser suo bella, e gentile
ne gli atti ed amorosa,
tanto lo imaginar, che non si posa,
l’adorna ne la mente ov’io la porto;
non che da se medesmo sia sottile

a così alta cosa,
ma da la sua vertute ha quel ch’elli osa
oltre al poder che natura ci ha porto.
E’ sua beltà del suo valor conforto,
in quanto giudicar si puote effetto

sovra degno suggetto,
in guisa ched è ‘l sol segno di foco;
lo qual a lui non dà ne to’ virtute,
ma fallo in altro loco
ne l’effetto parer di più salute.

Dunque, segnor di sì gentil natura
che questa nobilitate
che avven qua giuso e tutt’altra bontate
lieva principio de la tua altezza,
guarda la vita mia quanto ella è dura,

e prendine pietate,
ché lo tuo ardor per la costei bieltate
mi fa nel core aver troppa gravezza.
Falle sentire, Amor, per tua dolcezza,
il gran disio ch’i’ ho di veder lei;

non soffrir che costei
per giovanezza mi conduca a morte;
ché non s’accorge ancor com’ella piace,
né quant’io l’amo forte,
né che ne li occhi porta la mia pace.

Onor ti sarà grande se m’aiuti,
e a me ricco dono,
tanto quanto conosco ben ch’io sono
là ‘v’io non posso difender mia vita;
ché gli spiriti miei son combattuti

da tal ch’io non ragiono,
se per tua volontà non han perdono,
che posson guari star sanza finita.
Ed ancor tua potenzia fia sentita
da questa bella donna, che n’è degna;

che par che si convegna
di darle d’ogni ben gran compagnia,
com’a colei che fu nel mondo nata
per aver segnoria
sovra la mente d’ogni uom che la guata.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCI - Io sento sì d’Amor la gran possanza

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

Io sento sì d’Amor la gran possanza,
ch’io non posso durare
lungamente a soffrire, ond’io mi doglio;
però che ‘l suo valor si pur avanza,
e ‘l mio sento mancare

sì ch’io son meno ognora ch’io non soglio.
Non dico ch’Amor faccia più ch’io voglio,
ché se facesse quanto il voler chiede,
quella vertù che natura mi diede
nol sosterria, però ch’ella è finita:

ma questo è quello ond’io prendo cordoglio,
che a la voglia il poder non terrà fede;
e se di buon voler nasce merzede,
io l’addimando per aver più vita
da li occhi che nel lor bello splendore

portan conforto ovunque io sento amore.
Entrano i raggi di questi occhi belli
ne’ miei innamorati,
e portan dolce ovunque io sento amaro;
e sanno lo cammin, sì come quelli

che già vi son passati,
e sanno il loco dove Amor lasciaro,
quando per li occhi miei dentro il menaro:
per che merzé, volgendosi, a me fanno,
e di colei cui son procaccian danno

celandosi da me, poi tanto l’amo
che sol per lei servir mi tegno caro.
E’ miei pensier, che pur d’amor si fanno,
come a lor segno, al suo servigio vanno:

per che l’adoperar sì forte bramo,

che s’io ‘l credesse far fuggendo lei,
lieve saria; ma so ch’io ne morrei.
Ben è verace amor quel che m’ha preso,
e ben mi stringe forte,
quand’io farei quel ch’io dico per lui;

ché nullo amore è di cotanto peso,
quanto è quel che la morte
face piacer, per ben servire altrui.
E io ‘n cotal voler fermato fui
sì tosto come il gran disio ch’io sento

fu nato per vertù del piacimento
che nel bel viso d’ogni bel s’accoglie.
Io son servente, e quando penso a cui,
qual ch’ella sia, di tutto son contento,
ché l’uom può ben servir contra talento;

e se merzé giovanezza mi toglie,
io spero tempo che più ragion prenda,
pur che la vita tanto si difenda.
Quand’io penso un gentil disio, ch’è nato
del gran disio ch’io porto,

ch’a ben far tira tutto il mio podere,
parmi esser di merzede oltrapagato;
e anche più ch’a torto
mi par di servidor nome tenere:
così dinanzi a li occhi del piacere

si fa ‘l servir merzé d’altrui bontate.
Ma poi ch’io mi ristringo a veritate,
convien che tal disio servigio conti;
però che s’io procaccio di valere,
non penso tanto a mia proprietate

quanto a colei che m’ha in sua podestate,

ché ‘l fo perché sua cosa in pregio monti;
e io son tutto suo; così mi tegno,
ch’Amor di tanto onor m’ha fatto degno.
Altri ch’Amor non mi potea far tale,

ch’eo fosse degnamente
cosa di quella che non s’innamora,
ma stassi come donna a cui non cale
de l’amorosa mente
che sanza lei non può passare un’ora.

Io non la vidi tante volte ancora
ch’io non trovasse in lei nova bellezza;
onde Amor cresce in me la sua grandezza
tanto quanto il piacer novo s’aggiugne.
Ond’elli avven che tanto fo dimora

in uno stato e tanto Amor m’avvezza
con un martiro e con una dolcezza,
quanto è quel tempo che spesso mi pugne,
che dura da ch’io perdo la sua vista
in fino al tempo ch’ella si racquista.

Canzon mia bella, se tu mi somigli,
tu non sarai sdegnosa
tanto quanto a la tua bontà s’avvene;
però ti prego che tu t’assottigli,
dolce mia amorosa,

in prender modo e via che ti stea bene.
Se cavalier t’invita o ti ritiene,
imprima che nel suo piacer ti metta,
espia, se far lo puoi, de la sua setta,
se vuoi saver qual è la sua persona;

chè ‘l buon col buon sempre camera tene.
Ma elli avven che spesso altri si getta
in compagnia che non è che disdetta
di mala fama ch’altri di lui suona:

con rei non star né a cerchio né ad arte,

ché non fu mai saver tener lor parte.
Canzone, a’ tre men rei di nostra terra
te n’anderai prima che vadi altrove:
li due saluta, e ‘l terzo vo’ che prove
di trarlo fuor di mala setta in pria.

Digli che ‘l buon col buon non prende guerra,
prima che co’ malvagi vincer prove;
digli ch’è folle chi non si rimove
per tema di vergogna da follia;
che que’ la teme c’ha del mal paura,

perché, fuggendo l’un, l’altro assicura.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCII - Dante Alleghier, d’ogni senno pregiato Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

UN AMICO A DANTE

Dante Alleghier, d’ogni senno pregiato
che ‘n corpo d’om si potesse trovare,
un tuo amico di debile affare
da la tua parte s’era richiamato

a una donna che l’ha sì incolpato
con fini spade di sottil tagliare,
che in nulla guisa ne pensa scampare,
però che’ colpi han già il cor toccato.

Onde a te cade farne alta vendetta
di quella che l’ha sì forte conquiso,
che null’altra mai non se ne inframetta.

Delle sue condizioni io vi diviso,
ch’ell’è una leggiadra giovinetta
che porta propiamente Amor nel viso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCIII - Io Dante a te che m’hai così chiamato

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

RISPOSTA DI DANTE

Io Dante a te che m’hai così chiamato
rispondo brieve con poco pensare,
però che più non posso soprastare,
tanto m’ha ‘l tuo pensier forte affannato.

Ma ben vorrei saper dove e in qual lato
ti richiamasti, per me ricordare:
forse che per mia lettera mandare
saresti d’ogni colpo risanato.

Ma s’ella è donna che porti anco vetta,
sì ‘n ogni parte mi pare esser fiso
ch’ella verrà a farti gran disdetta.

Secondo detto m’hai ora, m’avviso
ch’ella è sì d’ogni peccato netta
come angelo che stia in paradiso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCIV - Novellamente Amor mi giura e dice Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza MESSER A DANTE

Novellamente Amor mi giura e dice
d’una donna gentil, s’i’ la riguardo,
che per vertù de lo su’ novo sguardo
ella sarà del meo cor beatrice.

Io ch’ho provato po’ come disdice,
quando vede imbastito lo suo dardo,
ciò che promette, a morte mi do tardo,
ch’i’ non potrò contraffar la fenice.

S’io levo gli occhi, e del suo colpo perde
lo core mio quel poco che di vita
gli rimase d’un’altra sua ferita.

Che farò, Dante? ch’Amor pur m’invita,
e d’altra parte il tremor mi disperde
che peggio che lo scur no mi sia ‘l verde.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCV - I’ ho veduto già senza radice Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza DANTE A PER RISPOSTA

I’ ho veduto già senza radice
legno che per omor tanto gagliardo,
che que’ che vide nel fiume lombardo
cader suo figlio, fronde fuor n’elice;

ma frutto no, però che ‘l contradice
natura, ch’al difetto fa riguardo,
perché conosce che saria bugiardo
sapor non fatto da vera notrice.

Giovane donna a cotal guisa verde
talor per gli occhi sì a dentro è gita,
che tardi poi è stata la partita.

Periglio è grande in donna sì vestita:
però [l’affronto] de la gente verde
parmi che la tua caccia [non] seguer de’.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCVI - Perch’io non trovo chi meco ragioni

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

DANTE A MESSER

Perch’io non trovo chi meco ragioni
del signor a cui siete voi ed io,
conviemmi sodisfare al gran disio
ch’i’ ho di dire i pensamenti boni.

Null’altra cosa appo voi m’accagioni
del lungo e del noioso tacer mio
se non il loco ov’i’ son, ch’è sì rio,
che ‘l ben non trova chi albergo li doni.

Donna non ci ha ch’Amor le venga al volto,
né omo ancora che per lui sospiri;
e chi ‘l facesse qua sarebbe stolto.

Oh, messer Cin, come ‘l tempo è rivolto
a danno nostro e de li nostri diri,
da po’ che ‘l ben è sì poco ricolto!

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCVII - Dante, i’ non so in qual albergo soni Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

A DANTE IN RISPOSTA

Dante, i’ non so in qual albergo soni
lo ben, ch’è da ciascun messo in oblio;
è sì gran tempo che di qua fuggio,
che dal contraro son nati li troni;

e per le variate condizioni
chi ‘l ben tacesse non risponde al fio:
lo ben sa’ tu che predicava Iddio,
e nol tacea nel regno de’ dimoni.

Dunque s’al ben ciascun ostello è tolto
nel mondo, in ogni parte ove ti giri,
vuoli tu anco far dispiacer molto?

Diletto frate mio, di pene involto,
merzé per quella donna che tu miri,
d’opra non star, se di fè non se’ sciolto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCVIII - Dante, i’ ho preso l’abito di doglia Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza MESSER A DANTE

Dante, i’ ho preso l’abito di doglia
e innanzi altrui di lagrimar non curo,
ché ‘l vel tinto ch’i’ vidi e ‘l drappo scuro
d’ogni allegrezza e d’ogni ben mi spoglia;

e lo cor m’arde in disiosa voglia
di pur doler mentre ‘n vita duro,
fatto di quel che dotta ogn’uom sicuro,
sol che ciascun dolore in me s’accoglia.

Dolente vo, pascendomi sospiri,
quanto posso inforzando ‘l mio lamento
per quella che si duol ne’ miei desiri.

E però, se tu sai novo tormento,
mandalo al disioso dei martiri,
che fie albergato di coral talento.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

XCIX - Messer Brunetto, questa pulzelletta

Altre rime d’amore e di corrispondenza

DANTE A MESSER BRUNO BRUNELLESCHI

Messer Brunetto, questa pulzelletta
con esso voi si ven la pasqua a fare:
non intendete pasqua di mangiare,
ch’ella non mangia, anzi vuol esser letta.

La sua sentenzia non richiede fretta,
né luogo di romor né da giullare;
anzi si vuol più volte lusingare
prima che ‘n intelletto altrui si metta.

Se voi non la intendete in questa guisa,
in vostra gente ha molti frati Alberti
da intender ciò ch’è posto loro in mano.

Con lor vi restringete sanza risa;
e se li altri de’ dubbi non son certi,
ricorrete a la fine a messer Giano.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

C - Io son venuto al punto de la rota

Rime per la donna pietra

Io son venuto al punto de la rota
che l’orizzonte, quando il sol si corca,
ci partorisce il geminato cielo,
e la stella d’amor ci sta remota
per lo raggio lucente che la ‘nforca

sì di traverso, che le si fa velo;
e quel pianeta che conforta il gelo
si mostra tutto a noi per lo grand’arco
nel qual ciascun di sette fa poca ombra:
e però non disgombra

un sol penser d’amore, ond’io son carco,
la mente mia, ch’è più dura che petra
in tener forte imagine di petra.
Levasi de la rena d’Etiopia
lo vento peregrin che l’aere turba,

per la spera del sol ch’ora la scalda;
e passa il mare, onde conduce copia
di nebbia tal, che, s’altro non la sturba,
questo emisperio chiude tutto e salda;
e poi si solve, e cade in bianca falda

di fredda neve ed in noiosa pioggia,
onde l’aere s’attrista tutto e piagne:
e Amor, che sue ragne
ritira in alto pel vento che pioggia,
non m’abbandona; sì è bella donna

questa crudel che m’è data per donna.
Fuggito è ogne augel che ‘l caldo segue
del paese d’Europa, che non perde
le sette stelle gelide unquemai;
e li altri han posto a le lor voci triegue

per non sonarle infino al tempo verde,

se ciò non fosse per cagion di guai;
e tutti li animali che son gai
di lor notura, son d’amor disciolti,
però che ‘l freddo lor spirito ammorta:

e ‘l mio più d’amor porta;
ché li dolzi pensier non mi son tolti
né mi son dati per volta di tempo,
ma donna li mi dà c’ha picciol tempo.
che trasse fuor la vertù d’Ariete

per adornare il mondo, e morta è l’erba;
ramo di foglia verde a noi s’asconde
se non se in lauro, in pino o in abete
o in alcun che sua verdura serba;
e tanto è la stagion forte ed acerba,

c’ha morti li fioretti per le piagge,
li quai non poten tollerare la brina:
e la crudele spina
però Amor di cor non la mi tragge;
per ch’io son fermo di portarla sempre

ch’io sarò in vita, s’io vivesse sempre.
Versan le vene le fummifere acque
per li vapor che la terra ha nel ventre,
che d’abisso li tira suso in alto;
onde cammino al bel giorno mi piacque

che ora è fatto rivo, e sarà mentre
che durerà del verno il grande assalto;
la terra fa un suol che par di smalto,
e l’acqua morta si converte in vetro
per la freddura che di fuor la serra:

e io de la mia guerra
non son però tornato un passo a retro,
né vo’ tornar; ché se ‘l martiro è dolce,
la morte de’ passare ogni altro dolce.

Canzone, or che sarà di me ne l’altro

dolce tempo novello, quando piove
amore in terra da tutti li cieli,
quando per questi geli
amore è solo in me, e non altrove?
Saranne quello ch’è d’un uom di marmo,

se in pargoletta fia per core un marmo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CI - Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra

Rime per la donna pietra

Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra
son giunto, lasso!, ed al bianchir de’ colli,
quando si perde lo color ne l’erba;
e ‘l mio disio però non cangia il verde,
si è barbato ne la dura petra
che parla e sente come fosse donna.

Similemente questa nova donna
si sta gelata come neve a l’ombra;
che non la move, se non come petra,
il dolce tempo che riscalda i colli
e che li fa tornar di bianco in verde
perché li copre di fioretti e d’erba.

Quand’ella ha in testa una ghirlanda d’erba,
trae de la mente nostra ogn’altra donna;
perché si mischia il crespo giallo e ‘l verde
sì bel, ch’Amor lì viene a stare a l’ombra,
che m’ha serrato intra piccioli colli
più forte assai che la calcina petra.

La sua bellezza ha più vertù che petra,
e ‘l colpo suo non può sanar per erba;
ch’io son fuggito per piani e per colli,
per potere scampar da cotal donna;
e dal suo lume non mi può far ombra
poggio né muro mai né fronda verde.

Io l’ho veduta già vestita a verde
sì fatta, ch’ella avrebbe messo in petra
l’amor ch’io porto pur a la sua ombra;
ond’io l’ho chesta in un bel prato d’erba
innamorata, com’anco fu donna,
e chiuso intorno d’altissimi colli.

Ma ben ritorneranno i fiumi a’ colli
prima che questo legno molle e verde

s’infiammi, come suol far bella donna,
di me; che mi torrei dormire in petra
tutto il mio tempo e gir pascendo l’erba,
sol per veder do’ suoi panni fanno ombra.

Quandunque i colli fanno più nera ombra,
sotto un bel verde la giovane donna
la fa sparer, com’uom petra sott’erba.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CII - Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna

Rime per la donna pietra

Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna
la tua vertù non cura in alcun tempo
che suol de l’altre belle farsi donna;
e poi s’accorse ch’ell’era mia donna
per lo tuo raggio ch’al volto mi luce,

d’ogne crudelità si fece donna;
sì che non par ch’ell’abbia cor di donna
ma di qual fiera l’ha d’amor più freddo;
ché per lo tempo caldo e per lo freddo
mi fa sembiante pur come una donna

che fosse fatta d’una bella petra
per man di quei che me’ intagliasse in petra.
E io, che son costante più che petra
in ubidirti per bieltà di donna,
porto nascoso il colpo de la petra,

con la qual tu mi desti come a petra
che t’avesse innoiato lungo tempo,
tal che m’andò al core ov’io son petra.
E mai non si scoperse alcuna petra
o da splendor di sole o da sua luce,

che tanta avesse né vertù né luce
che mi potesse atar da questa petra,
sì ch’ella non mi meni col suo freddo
colà dov’io sarò di morte freddo.
Segnor, tu sai che per algente freddo

l’acqua diventa cristallina petra
là sotto tramontana ov’è il gran freddo
e l’aere sempre in elemento freddo
vi si converte, sì che l’acqua è donna
in quella parte per cagion del freddo:

così dinanzi dal sembiante freddo

mi ghiaccia sopra il sangue d’ogne tempo,
e quel pensiero che m’accorcia il tempo
mi si converte tutto in corpo freddo,
che m’esce poi per mezzo de la luce

là ond’entrò la dispietata luce.
In lei s’accoglie d’ogni bieltà luce:
così di tutta crudeltate il freddo
le corre al core, ove non va tua luce:
per che ne li occhi sì bella mi luce

quando la miro, ch’io la veggio in petra,
e po’ in ogni altro ov’io volga mia luce.
Da li occhi suoi mi ven la dolce luce
che mi fa non caler d’ogn’altra donna:
così foss’ella più pietosa donna

ver me, che chiamo di notte e di luce,
solo per lei servire, e luogo e tempo!
Né per altro disio viver gran tempo.
Però, Vertù che se’ prima che tempo,
prima che moto o che sensibil luce,

increscati di me, c’ho sì mal tempo:
entrale in core omai, ché ben n’è tempo,
sì che per te n’esca fuor lo freddo
che non mi lascia aver, com’altri, tempo;
ché se mi giunge lo tuo forte tempo

in tal stato, questa gentil petra
mi vedrà coricare in poca petra
per non levarmi se non dopo il tempo,
quando vedrò se mai fu bella donna
nel mondo come questa acerba donna.

Canzone, io porto ne la mente donna
tal, che con tutto ch’ella mi sia petra,
mi dà baldanza, ond’ogni uom mi par freddo;
sì ch’io ardisco a far per questo freddo

65 la novità che per tua forma luce,

che non fu mai pensata in alcun tempo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIII - Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro

Rime per la donna pietra

Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro
com’è ne li atti questa bella petra,
la quale ognora impetra
maggior durezza e più natura cruda,
e veste sua persona d’un diaspro

tal, che per lui, o perch’ella s’arretra,
non esce di faretra
saetta che già mai la colga ignuda:
ed ella ancide, e non val ch’om si chiuda
né si dilunghi da’ colpi mortali,

che, com’avesser ali,
giuncono altrui e spezzan ciascun’arme;
sì ch’io non so da lei né posso atarme.
Non trovo scudo ch’ella non mi spezzi
né loco che dal suo viso m’asconda;

ché, come fior di fronda,
così de la mia mente tien la cima:
cotanto del mio mal par che si prezzi,
quanto legno di mar che non lieva onda;
e ‘l peso che m’affonda

è tal che non potrebbe adequar rima.
Ahi angosciosa e dispietata lima
che sordamente la mia vita scemi,
perché non ti ritemi
sì di rodermi il core a scorza a scorza,

com’io di dire altrui chi ti dà forza?
Ché più mi triema il cor qualora io penso
di lei in parte ov’altri li occhi induca,
per tema non traluca
lo mio penser di fuor sì che si scopra,

ch’io non fo de la morte, che ogni senso

co li denti d’Amor già mi manduca;
ciò è che ‘l pensier bruca
la lor vertù sì che n’allenta l’opra.
E’ m’ha percosso in terra, e stammi sopra

con quella spada ond’elli ancise Dido,
Amore, a cui io grido
merzé chiamando, e umilmente il priego;
ed el d’ogni merzé par messo al niego.
Egli alza ad ora ad or la mano, e sfida

la debole mia vita, esto perverso,
che disteso a riverso
mi tiene in terra d’ogni guizzo stanco:
allor mi surgon ne la mente strida;
e ‘l sangue, ch’è per le vene disperso,

fuggendo corre verso
lo cor, che ‘l chiama; ond’io rimango bianco.
Elli mi fiede sotto il braccio manco
sì forte, che ‘l dolor nel cor rimbalza:
allor dico: “S’elli alza

un’altra volta, Morte m’avrà chiuso
prima che ‘l colpo sia disceso giuso”.
Così vedess’io lui fender per mezzo
lo core a la crudele che ‘l mio squatra!
poi non mi sarebb’atra

la morte, ov’io per sua bellezza corro:
ché tanto dà nel sol quanto nel rezzo
questa scherana micidiale e latra.
Ohmè, perché non latra
per me, com’io per lei, nel caldo borro?

ché tosto griderei: “Io vi soccorro”.
e fare’l volentier, sì come quelli
che ne’ biondi capelli
ch’Amor per consumarmi increspa e dora

metterei mano, e piacere’le allora.

S’io avessi le belle trecce prese,
che fatte son per me scudiscio e ferza,
pigliandole anzi terza,
con esse passerei vespero e squille:
e non sarei pietoso né cortese,

anzi farei com’orso quando scherza;
e se Amor me ne sferza,
io mi vendicherei di più di mille.
Ancor ne li occhi, ond’escon le faville
che m’infiammano il cor, ch’io porto anciso,

guarderei presso e fiso,
per vendicar lo fuggir che mi face;
e poi le renderei con amor pace.
Canzon, vattene dritto a quella donna
che m’ha ferito il core e che m’invola

quello ond’io ho più gola,
e dàlle per lo cor d’una saetta;
ché bell’onor s’acquista in far vendetta.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CIV - Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute

Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio

Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute,
e seggonsi di fore;
ché dentro siede Amore,
lo quale è in segnoria de la mia vita.
Tanto son belle e di tanta vertute,

che ‘l possente segnore,
dico quel ch’è nel core,
a pena del parlar di lor s’aita.
Ciascuna per dolente e sbigottita,
come persona discacciata e stanca,

cui tutta gente manca
a cui vertute né belta non vale.
Tempo fu già nel quale,
secondo il lor parlar, furon dilette;
or sono a tutti in ira ed in non cale.

Queste così solette
venute son come a casa d’amico;
ché sanno ben che dentro è quel ch’io dico.
Dolesi l’una con parole molto,
e ‘n su la man si posa

come succisa rosa:
il nudo braccio, di dolor colonna,
sente l’oraggio che cade dal volto;
l’altra man tiene ascosa
la faccia lagrimosa:

discinta e scalza, e sol di sé par donna.
Come Amor prima per la rotta gonna

la vide in parte che il tacere è bello,
egli, pietoso e fello,
di lei e del dolor fece dimanda.

“Oh di pochi vivanda”,
rispose in voce con sospiri mista,
“nostra natura qui a te ci manda:
io, che son la più trista,
son suora a la tua madre, e son Drittura;

povera, vedi, a panni ed a cintura”.
Poi che fatta si fu palese e conta,
doglia e vergogna prese
lo mio segnore, e chiese
chi fosser l’altre due ch’eran con lei.

E questa, ch’era sì di piacer pronta,
tosto che lui intese,
più nel dolor s’accese,
dicendo: “A te non duol de li occhi miei?”.
Poi cominciò: “Sì come saper dei,

di fonte nasce il Nilo picciol fiume
quivi dove ‘l gran lume
toglie a la terra del vinco la fronda:
sovra la vergin onda
generai io costei che m’è da lato

e che s’asciuga con la treccia bionda.
Questo mio bel portato,
mirando sé ne la chiara fontana,
generò questa che m’è più lontana”.
Fenno i sospiri Amore un poco tardo;

e poi con gli occhi molli,
che prima furon folli,
salutò le germane sconsolate.
E poi che prese l’uno e l’altro dardo,
disse: “Drizzate i colli:

ecco l’armi ch’io volli;
per non usar, vedete, son turbate.
Larghezza e Temperanza e l’altre nate
del nostro sangue mendicando vanno.
Però, se questo è danno,

piangano gli occhi e dolgasi la bocca
de li uomini a cui tocca,
che sono a’ raggi di cotal ciel giunti;
non noi, che semo de l’etterna rocca:
ché, se noi siamo or punti,

noi pur saremo, e pur tornerà gente
che questo dardo farà star lucente”.
E io, che ascolto nel parlar divino
consolarsi e dolersi
così alti dispersi,

l’essilio che m’è dato, onor mi tegno:
ché, se giudizio o forza di destino
vuol pur che il mondo versi
i bianchi fiori in persi,
cader co’ buoni è pur di lode degno.

E se non che de li occhi miei ‘l bel segno
per lontananza m’è tolto dal viso,
che m’have in foco miso,
lieve mi conterei ciò che m’è grave.
Ma questo foco m’have

già consumato sì l’ossa e la polpa,
che Morte al petto m’ha posto la chiave.
Onde, s’io ebbi colpa,
più lune ha volto il sol poi che fu spenta,
se colpa muore perché l’uom si penta.

Canzone, a’ panni tuoi non ponga uom mano,
per veder quel che bella donna chiude:

bastin le parti nude;
lo dolce pome a tutta gente niega,
per cui ciascun man piega.

Ma s’elli avvien che tu alcun mai truovi
amico di virtù, ed e’ ti priega,
fatti di color novi,
poi li ti mostra; e ‘l fior, ch’è bel di fori,
fa disiar ne li amorosi cori.

Canzone, uccella con le bianche penne;
canzone, caccia con li neri veltri,
che fuggir mi convenne,
ma far mi poterian di pace dono.
Però nol fan che non san quel che sono:

camera di perdon savio uom non serra,
ché ‘l perdonare è bel vincer di guerra.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CV - Se vedi li occhi miei di pianger vaghi

Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio

Se vedi li occhi miei di pianger vaghi
per novella pietà che 'l cor mi strugge,
per lei ti priego che da te non fugge,
Signor, che tu di tal piacere i svaghi;

con la tua dritta man, cioè, che paghi
chi la giustizia uccide e poi rifugge
al gran tiranno, del cui tosco sugge
ch'elli ha già sparto e vuol che 'l mondo allaghi,

e messo ha di paura tanto gelo
nel cor de' tuo' fedei, che ciascun tace:
ma tu, foco d'amor, lume del cielo,

questa vertù che nuda e fredda giace
levala su vestita del tuo velo,
ché sanza lei non è in terra pace.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CVI - Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire

Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio

Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire
a voler ch'è di veritate amico;
però, donne, s'io dico
parole quasi contra a tutta gente,
non vi maravigliate,

ma conoscete il vil vostro disire;
che la beltà d'Amore in voi consente,
a vertù solamente
formata fu dal suo decreto antico,
contra 'l qual voi fallate.

Io dico a voi che siete innamorate
che se vertute a noi
fu data, e beltà a voi,
e a costui di due potere un fare,
voi non dovreste amare,

ma coprir quanto di biltà v'è dato,
poi che non c'è vertù, ch'era suo segno.
Lasso! a che dicer vegno?
Dico che bel disdegno
sarebbe in donna, di ragion laudato,

partir beltà da sè per suo commiato.
Omo da sè vertù fatto ha lontana;
omo no, mala bestia ch'om simiglia.
O Deo, qual maraviglia
voler cadere in servo di signore,

o ver di vita in morte!
Vertute, al suo fattor sempre sottana,
lui obedisce e lui acquista onore,
donne, tanto che Amore

la segna d’eccellente sua famiglia

ne la beata corte:
lietamente esce da le belle porte,
a la sua donna torna;
lieta va e soggiorna,
lietamente ovra suo gran vassallaggio;

per lo corto viaggio
conserva, adorna, accresce ciò che trova;
Morte repugna sì, che lei non cura.
O cara ancella, e pura,
colt’hai nel ciel misura;

tu sola fai segnore, e quest’è prova
che tu se’ possession che sempre giova.
Servo non di signor, ma di vil servo
si fa chi da cotal serva si scosta.
Vedete quanto costa,

se ragionate l’uno e l’altro danno,
a chi da lei si svia:
questo servo signor tant’è protervo,
che gli occhi ch’a la mente lume fanno
chiusi per lui si stanno,

sì che per gir ne convene a colui posta,
ch’adocchia pur follia.
Ma perché lo meo dire util vi sia,
discenderò del tutto
in parte ed in costrutto

più lieve, sì che men grave s’intende;
ché rado sotto benda
parola oscura giugne ad intelletto;
per che parlar con voi si vole aperto:
ma questo vo’ per merto,

per voi, non per me certo,

ch’abbiate a vil ciascuno e a dispetto,
ché simiglianza fa nascer diletto.
Chi è servo è come quello ch’è seguace
ratto a segnore, e non sa dove vada,

per dolorosa strada;
come l’avaro seguitando avere,
ch’a tutti segnoreggia.
Corre l’avaro, ma più fugge pace:
oh mente cieca, che non pò vedere

lo suo folle volere
che ‘l numero, ch’ognora a passar bada,
che ‘nfinito vaneggia!
Ecco giunta colei che ne pareggia:
dimmi, che hai tu fatto,

cieco avaro disfatto?
Rispondimi, se puoi altro che nulla.
Maladetta tua culla,
che lusingò cotanti sonni invano!
Maladetto lo tuo perduto pane,

che non si perde al cane!
ché da sera e da mane
hai raunato e stretto ad ambo mano
ciò che sì tosto si rifà lontano.
Come con dismisura si rauna,

così con dismisura si distringe:
questo è quello che pinge
molti in servaggio; e s’alcun si difende,
non è sanza gran briga.
Morte, che fai? che fai fera Fortuna,

che non solvete quel che non si spende?
se ‘l fate, a cui si rende?
Non so, poscia che tal cerchio ne cinge
che di là su ne riga.

Colpa è de la ragion che nol castiga.

Se vol dire “I’ son presa”,
ah com poca difesa
mostra segnore a cui servo sormonta!
Qui si raddoppia l’onta,
se ben si guarda là dov’io addito,

falsi animali, a voi ed altrui crudi,
che vedete gir nudi
per colli e per paludi
omini innanzi cui vizio è fuggito,
e voi tenete vil fango vestito.

Fassi dinanzi da l’avaro volto
vertù, che i suoi nimici a pace invita,
con matera pulita,
per allettarlo a sé; ma poco vale,
ché sempre fugge l’esca.

Poi che girato l’ha chiamando molto,
gitta ‘l pasto ver lui, tanto glien cale;
ma quei non v’apre l’ale:
e se pur vene quand’ell’è partita,
tanto par che li ‘ncresca

come ciò possa dar, sì che non esca
dal benefizio loda.
I’ vo’ che ciascun m’oda:
chi con tardare, e chi con vana vista,
chi con sembianza trista

volge il donare in vender tanto caro
quanto sa sol chi tal compera paga.
Volete udir se piaga?
Tanto chi prende smaga,
che ‘l negar poscia non li pare amaro.

Così altrui e sé concia l’avaro.

Disvelato v’ho, donne, in alcun membro
la viltà de la gente che vi mira,
perché l’aggiate in ira;
ma troppo è più ancor quel che s’asconde

perché a dicerne è lado.
In ciascun è di ciascun vizio assembro,
per che amistà nel mondo si confonde;
ché l’amorose fronde
di radice di ben altro ben tira,

poi sol simile è in grado.
Vedete come conchiudendo vado:
che non dee creder quella
cui par bene esser bella,
esser amata da questi cotali;

che se beltà tra i mali
volemo annumerar, creder si pone,
chiamando amore appetito di fera.
Oh cotal donna pera
che sua biltà dischiera

da natural bontà per tal cagione,
e crede amor fuor d’orto di ragione!
Canzone, presso di qui è una donna
ch’è del nostro paese;
bella, saggia, e cortese

la chiaman tutti, e neun se n’accorge
quando suo nome porge,
Bianca, Giovanna, Contessa chiamando:
a costei te ne va chiusa ed onesta;
prima con lei t’arresta,

prima a lei manifesta
quel che tu se’ e quel per ch’io ti mando;
poi seguirai secondo suo comando.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CVII - Lassar vo’ lo trovare di Becchina Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio

A DANTE

Lassar vo’ lo trovare di Becchina,
Dante Alighieri, e dir del Mariscalco:
ch’e’ par fiorin d’oro ed è di ricalco,
par zuccar caffettin ed è salina,

par pan di grano ed è di saggina,
par una torre ed è un vil balco,
ed è un nibbio e pare un girfalco,
e pare un gallo ed è una gallina.

Sonetto mio, vattene a Fiorenza,
dove vedrai le donne e le donzelle;
dì che ‘l su’ fatto è solo di parvenza.

Ed eo, per me, ne conterò novelle
al bon re Carlo conte di Provenza;
e per sto mo’ gli frizzarò la pelle.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CVIII - Dante Alighier, s'i' son bon begolardo Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio

A DANTE

Dante Alighier, s'i' son bon begolardo,
tu mi tien bene la lancia a le reni;
s'eo desno con l'altrui, e tu vi ceni;
s'eo mordo il grasso, e tu ne suggi il lardo;

s'eo cimo il panno, e tu vi freghi il cardo;
s'eo so' discorso, e tu poco t'affreni;
s'eo gentileggio, e tu messer t'avveni;
s'eo so' fatto romano, e tu lombardo.

Sì che, laudato Deo, rimproverare
poco pò l'uno l'altro di noi due:
sventura o poco senno cel fa fare.

E se di questo voi dicere piue,
Dante Alighier, i' t'avarò a stancare,
ch'eo so' lo pungiglione e tu se' 'l bue.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CIX - Cecco Angelier, tu mi pari un musardo Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio RISPOSTA DI MESSER GUELFO TAVIANI IN DIFESA DI DANTE

, tu mi pari un musardo,
sì tostamente corri, e non vi peni
deliberar, ma incontanente sfreni
come poledro o punto caval sardo.

Or pensi sia del ferrante al baiardo
che con Dante di motti tegni meni,
che di filosofia ha tante veni?
Tu mi pari più matto che gagliardo.

Filosofi tesoro disprezzare
den per ragione, e loro usanza fue
sol lo 'ngegno in scienza assottigliare.

Or queste sono le virtute sue;
però pensa con cui dei rampognare:
chi follemente salta tosto rue.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CX - Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio MESSER A DANTE

Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona
lo disio amoroso de la speme,
che nascer fanno gli occhi del bel seme
di quel piacer che dentro si ragiona,

i’ dico, poi se morte le perdona
e Amore tienla più de le due estreme,
che l’alma sola, la qual più non teme,
si può ben trasformar d’altra persona.

E ciò mi fa dir quella ch’è maestra
di tutte cose, per quel ch’i’ sent’anco,
entrato, lasso!, per la mia finestra.

Ma prima che m’uccida il nero e il bianco,
da te, che sei stato dentro ed extra,
vorre’ saper se ‘l mi’ creder è manco.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXI - Io sono stato con Amore insieme Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio

RISPOSTA DI DANTE A

Io sono stato con Amore insieme
de la circulazion del sol mia nona,
e so com'egli affrena e come sprona
e come sotto lui si ride e geme.

Chi ragione o virtù contra gli sprieme,
fa come que' che 'n la tempesta sona
credendo far colà dove si tona
esser le guerre de' vapori sceme.

Però nel cerchio de la sua palestra
liber arbitrio già mai non fu franco,
sì che consiglio invan vi si balestra.

Ben può con nuovi spron punger lo fianco,
e qual che sia 'l piacer ch'ora n'addestra,
seguitar si convien, se l'altro è stanco.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CXII - Cercando di trovar minera in oro Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio

MESSER AL MARCHESE MOROELLO MALASPINA

Cercando di trovar minera in oro
di quel valor cui gentilezza inchina,
punto m'ha 'l cor, marchese, mala spina,
in guisa che, versando il sangue, i' moro.

E più per quel ched i' non trovo ploro
che per la vita natural che fina:
cotal pianeta, lasso!, mi destina
che dov'io perdo volentier dimoro.

E più le pene mie vi farie conte,
se non ched i' non vo' che troppa gioia
vo' concepiate di ciò che m'è noia.

Ben poria il mio segnor, anzi ch'io moia,
far convertir in oro duro monte,
c'ha fatto già di marmo nascer fonte.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CXIII - Degno fa voi trovare ogni tesoro Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio

RISPOSTA DI DANTE IN NOME DEL MARCHESE MOROELLO

Degno fa voi trovare ogni tesoro
la voce vostra sì dolce e latina,
ma volgibile cor ven disvicina,
ove stecco d’Amor mai non fé foro,

Io che trafitto sono in ogni poro
del prun che con sospir si medicina,
pur trovo la minera in cui s’affina
quella virtù per cui mi discoloro.

Non è colpa del sol se l’orba fronte
nol vede quando scende e quando poia,
ma de la condizion malvagia e croia.

S’i’ vi vedesse uscir de gli occhi ploia
per prova fare a le parole conte,
non mi porreste di sospetto in ponte.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXIV - Io mi credea del tutto esser partito

Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio

DANTE A MESSER

Io mi credea del tutto esser partito
da queste nostre rime, messer Cino,
ché si conviene omai altro cammino
a la mia nave più lungi dal lito:

ma perch'i' ho di voi più volte udito
che pigliar vi lasciate a ogni uncino,
piacemi di prestate un pocolino
a questa penna lo stancato dito.

Chi s'innamora sì come voi fate,
or qua or là, e sé lega e dissolve,
mostra ch'Amor leggermente il saetti.

Però se leggier cor così vi volve,
priego che con vertù il correggiate,
sì che s'accordi i fatti a' dolci detti.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

CXV - **Poi ch’i’ fu’, Dante, dal mio natal sito** Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio

Poi ch’i’ fu’, Dante, dal mio natal sito
fatto per greve essilio pellegrino
e lontanato dal piacer più fino
che mai formasse il Piacer infinito,

io son piangendo per lo mondo gito
sdegnato del morir come meschino,
e s’ho trovato a lui simil vicino,
dett’ho che questi m’ha lo cor ferito.

Né da le prime braccia dispietate,
onde ‘l fermato disperar m’assolve,
son mosso perch’aiuto non aspetti;

ch’un piacer sempre me lega ed involve,
il qual conven che a simil di beltate
in molte donne sparte mi diletti.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXVI - Amor, da che convien pur ch’io mi doglia

Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio

Amor, da che convien pur ch’io mi doglia
perché la gente m’oda,
e mostri me d’ogni vertute spento,
dammi savere a piangere come voglia,
sì che ‘l duol che si snoda

portin le mie parole com’io ‘l sento.
Tu vo’ ch’io muoia, e io ne son contento:
ma chi mi scuserà, s’io non so dire
ciò che mi fai sentire?
chi crederà ch’io sia omai sì colto?

E se mi dai parlar quanto tormento,
fa, signor mio, che innanzi al mio morire
questa rea per me nol possa udire;
ché, se intendesse ciò che dentro ascolto,
pietà faria men bello il suo bel volto.

Io non posso fuggir, ch’ella non vegna
ne l’imagine mia,
se non come il pensier che la vi mena.
L’anima folle, che al suo mal s’ingegna,
com’ella è bella e ria

così dipinge, e forma la sua pena:
poi la riguarda, e quando ella è ben piena
del gran disio che de li occhi le tira,
incontro a sé s’adira,
c’ha fatto il foco ond’ella trista incende.

Quale argomento di ragion raffrena,
ove tanta tempesta in me si gira?
L’angoscia, che non cape dentro, spira
fuor de la bocca sì ch’ella s’intende.

e anche a li occhi lor merito rende.

La nimica figura, che rimane
vittoriosa e fera
e signoreggia la vertù che vole,
vaga di se medesma andar mi fane
colà dov'ella è vera,

come simile a simil correr sole.
Ben conosco che va la neve al sole,
ma più non posso: fo come colui
che, nel podere altrui,
va co' suoi piedi al loco ov'egli è morto.

Quando son presso, parmi udir parole
dicer "Vie via vedrai morir costui!".
Allor mi volgo per veder a cui
mi raccomandi; e 'ntanto sono scorto
da li occhi che m'ancidono a gran torto.

Qual io divegno sì feruto, Amore,
sailo tu, e non io,
che rimani a veder me sanza vita;
e se l'anima torna poscia al core,
ignoranza ed oblio

stato è con lei, mentre ch'ella è partita.
Com'io risurgo, e miro la ferita
che mi disfece quand'io fui percosso,
confortar non mi posso
sì ch'io non triemi tutto di paura.

E mostra poi la faccia scolorita
qual fu quel trono che mi giunse a dosso;
che se con dolce riso è stato mosso,
lunga fiata poi rimane oscura,
perché lo spirto non si rassicura.

Così m'hai concio, Amore, in mezzo l'alpi,

ne la valle del fiume
lungo il qual sempre sopra me se’ forte:
qui vivo e morto, come vuoi, mi palpi,
merzé del fiero lume

che sfolgorando fa via a la morte.
Lasso! non donne qui, non genti accorte
veggio, a cui mi lamenti del mio male:
se a costei non ne cale,
non spero mai d’altrui aver soccorso.

E questa sbandeggiata di tua corte,
signor, non cura colpo di tuo strale:
fatto ha d’orgoglio al petto schermo tale,
ch’ogni saetta lì spunta suo corso;
per che l’armato cor da nulla è morso.

O montanina mia canzon, tu vai:
forse vedrai Fiorenza, la mia terra,
che fuor di sé mi serra,
vota d’amore e nuda di pietate;
se dentro v’entri, va dicendo: “Omai

non vi può far lo mio fattor più guerra:
là ond’io vegno una catena il serra
tal, che se piega vostra crudeltate,
non ha di ritornar qui libertate”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXVII - Per quella via che la bellezza corre

Rime varie del tempo dell’esilio

Per quella via che la bellezza corre
quando a svegliare Amor va ne la mente,
passa Lisetta baldanzosamente,
come colei che mi si crede torre.

E quando è giunta a piè di quella torre
che s’apre quando l’anima acconsente,
odesi voce dir subitamente:
“Volgiti, bella donna, e non ti porre;

però che dentro un’altra donna siede,
la qual di signoria chiese la verga
tosto che giunse, e Amor glile diede”.

Quando Lisetta accomiatar si vede
da quella parte dove Amore alberga,
tutta dipinta di vergogna riede.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

CXVIII - Lisetta voi de la vergogna storre Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio MESSER ALDOBRANDINO MEZZABATI DA PADOVA A PROPOSITO DEL PRECEDENTE SONETTO

Lisetta voi de la vergogna storre
e dargli guida nel camin dolente,
che la conduca fuor di cruda gente
en forza di colui che tosto acorre.

Beltà di donna sì se vuole opporre
alla schifezza che di viltà sente:
come la voce fusse conoscente
dirollo, poi ch'Amor me lo fa sporre.

Lo sir che guarda il poggio d'esta sede,
nanzi che dentro al nostro signor perga,
al coridor ch'è giunto poco crede;

e quando venne al porto di mercede,
la voce disse: "Alla rocca non s'erga
infin a tanto che 'l sir nol concede".

Per l'indice, clicca qui

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LXXIII - Chi udisse tossir la mal fatata
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CX - Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona
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CXVIII - Lisetta voi de la vergogna storre

LA VITA NUOVA

Questa è la prima opera di attribuzione certa di Dante, scritta tra il 1293 ed il 1295. Si tratta di un prosimetro nel quale sono inserite 31 liriche (25 sonetti, 1 ballata e 5 canzoni). Non si conoscono con precisione gli anni di composizione della Vita nuova, benché sia stata presumibilmente allestita tra il 1292 e il 1293. Lo stesso Dante, però, ci testimonia che il testo più antico risale al 1283, quando egli aveva diciotto anni, e che il più tardo risale al giugno del 1291, anniversario della morte di Beatrice. Altri sonetti sono probabilmente assegnabili al 1293 (in ogni caso le poesie non possono essere datate oltre il 1295): si può dunque ipotizzare con relativa certezza che le diverse componenti dell'opera sono frutto del lavoro di circa un decennio, culminato nella stesura vera e propria dell'opera in questione. Il testo che ne risulta è quindi una sorta di assemblaggio delle diverse poesie scritte in varie fasi delle vita di Dante e che vengono così riunite in una sola opera (appunto la Vita Nuova) a partire dal 1290, anno di morte di Beatrice.

Si può semplificare la trama dell'opera in tre momenti fondamentali della vita dell'autore: una prima fase in cui Beatrice gli concede il saluto, fonte di beatitudine e salvezza, una seconda in cui ciò non gli è più concesso, cosa che arreca in Dante una profonda sofferenza (dove Dante non vuole più ottenere da Beatrice qualcosa in cambio, ma semplicemente un amore fine a sé stesso), una terza in cui Beatrice muore e il rapporto non è più tra il poeta e la donna amata, ma tra il poeta e l'anima della donna amata. Dante narra di incontrare per la prima volta Beatrice quand'egli aveva appena nove anni e lei otto anni e quattro mesi (il numero nove, evidente richiamo alla Trinità appare diverse volte nell'opera: rappresenta il miracolo), e qui inizia la "tirannia di Amore" che egli stesso indica come causa dei suoi comportamenti. Rivedrà poi la sua 'musa' all'età di diciotto anni (1283) e dopo aver sognato Amore mentre tiene in braccio Beatrice che piangendo mangia il suo cuore, compone una lirica in cui chiede ai poeti la spiegazione di tale sogno allegorico. La risposta più puntuale, anche in vista degli sviluppi futuri, gli viene dal suo "primo amico" Guido Cavalcanti, il quale vede nel sogno un presagio di morte per la donna di Dante. Per non compromettere Beatrice, finge di corteggiare due altre donne dette dello "schermo" indicatagli da Amore, e soprattutto dedica a loro i suoi componimenti. Beatrice, venuta a conoscenza delle "noie" (il termine è variamente interpretato) arrecate dal Poeta alle donne, non gli concede più il suo saluto salvifico. A questo punto ha inizio la seconda parte del prosimetro in cui

Dante si prefigge di lodare la sua donna. In questa parte spicca il famoso sonetto Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare.

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I

In quella parte del libro de la mia memoria dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica la quale dice: *Incipit vita nova*. Sotto la quale rubrica io trovo scritte le parole le quali è mio intendimento d’assemplare in questo libello; e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenzia.

II

[I] Nove fiate già appresso lo mio nascimento era tornato lo cielo de la luce quasi a uno medesimo punto, quanto a la sua propria girazione, quando a li miei occhi apparve prima la gloriosa donna de la mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice li quali non sapeano che si chiamare.

Ella era in questa vita già stata tanto, che ne lo suo tempo lo cielo stellato era mosso verso la parte d'oriente de le dodici parti l'una d'un grado, sì che quasi dal principio del suo anno nono apparve a me, ed io la vidi quasi da la fine del mio nono.

Apparve vestita di nobilissimo colore, umile e onesto, sanguigno, cinta e ornata a la guisa che a la sua giovanissima etade si convenia.

In quello punto dico veracemente che lo spirito de la vita, lo quale dimora ne la secretissima camera de lo cuore, cominciò a tremare sì fortemente, che apparia ne li menimi polsi orribilmente; e tremando disse queste parole: "Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur michi".

In quello punto lo spirito animale, lo quale dimora ne l'alta camera ne la quale tutti li spiriti sensitivi portano le loro percezioni, si cominciò a maravigliare molto, e parlando spezialmente a li spiriti del viso, sì disse queste parole: "Apparuit iam beatitudo vestra".

In quello punto lo spirito naturale, lo quale dimora in quella parte ove si ministra lo nutrimento nostro, cominciò a piangere, e piangendo disse queste parole: "Heu miser, quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps!".

D'allora innanzi dico che Amore segnoreggiò la mia anima, la quale fu sì tosto a lui disponsata, e cominciò a prendere sopra me tanta sicurtade e tanta signoria per la vertù che li dava la mia imaginazione, che me convenia fare tutti li suoi piaceri compiutamente.

Elli mi comandava molte volte che io cercasse per vedere questa angiola giovanissima; onde io ne la mia puerizia molte volte l'andai cercando, e vedeala di sì nobili e laudabili portamenti, che certo di lei si potea dire quella parola del poeta Omero: "Ella non parea figliuola d'uomo mortale, ma di deo".

E avvegna che la sua imagine, la quale continuatamente meco stava, fosse baldanza d'Amore a segnoreggiare me, tuttavia era di sì nobilissima vertù, che nulla volta sofferse che Amore mi reggesse sanza lo fedele consiglio de la ragione in quelle cose là ove cotale consiglio fosse utile a udire.

E però che soprastare a le passioni e atti di tanta gioventudine para alcuno parlare fabuloso, mi partirò da esse; e trapassando molte cose le quali si

potrebbero trarre de l’essemplo onde nascono queste, verrò a quelle parole le quali sono scritte ne la mia memoria sotto maggiori paragrafi.

III

Poi che fuoro passati tanti die, che appunto erano compiuti li nove anni appresso l’apparimento soprascritto di questa gentilissima, ne l’ultimo di questi die avvenne che questa mirabile donna apparve a me vestita di colore bianchissimo, in mezzo a due gentili donne, le quali erano di più lunga etade; e passando per una via, volse li occhi verso quella parte ov’io era molto pauroso, e per la sua ineffabile cortesia, la quale è oggi meritata nel grande secolo, mi salutoe molto virtuosamente, tanto che me parve allora vedere tutti li termini de la beatitudine.

L’ora che lo suo dolcissimo salutare mi giunse, era fermamente nona di quello giorno; e però che quella fu la prima volta che le sue parole si mossero per venire a li miei orecchi, presi tanta dolcezza, che come inebriato mi partio da le genti, e ricorsi a lo solingo luogo d’una mia camera, e puosimi a pensare di questa cortesissima.

[III] E pensando di lei, mi sopragiunse uno soave sonno, ne lo quale m’apparve una maravigliosa visione: che me parea vedere ne la mia camera una nebula di colore di fuoco, dentro a la quale io discernea una figura d’uno segnore di pauroso aspetto a chi la guardasse; e pareami con tanta letizia, quanto a sé, che mirabile cosa era; e ne le sue parole dicea molte cose, le quali io non intendea se non poche; tra le quali intendea queste: “Ego dominus tuus”.

Ne le sue braccia mi parea vedere una persona dormire nuda, salvo che involta mi parea in uno drappo sanguigno leggeramente; la quale io riguardando molto intentivamente, conobbi ch’era la donna de la salute, la quale m’avea lo giorno dinanzi degnato di salutare.

E ne l’una de le mani mi parea che questi tenesse una cosa la quale ardesse tutta, e pareami che mi dicesse queste parole: “Vide cor tuum”.

E quando elli era stato alquanto, pareami che disvegliasse questa che dormia; e tanto si sforzava per suo ingegno, che le facea mangiare questa cosa che in mano li ardea, la quale ella mangiava dubitosamente.

Appresso ciò poco dimorava che la sua letizia si convertia in amarissimo pianto; e così piangendo, si ricogliea questa donna ne le sue braccia, e con essa mi parea che si ne gisse verso lo cielo; onde io sostenea sì grande angoscia, che lo mio deboletto sonno non poteo sostenere, anzi si ruppe e fui disvegliato.

E mantenente cominciai a pensare, e trovai che l’ora ne la quale m’era questa visione apparita, era la quarta de la notte stata; sì che appare manifestamente ch’ella fue la prima ora de le nove ultime ore de la notte.

Pensando io a ciò che m’era apparuto, propuosi di farlo sentire a molti li quali erano famosi trovatori in quello tempo: e con ciò fosse cosa che io avesse già

veduto per me medesimo l’arte del dire parole per rima, propuosi di fare uno sonetto, ne lo quale io salutasse tutti li fedeli d’Amore; e pregandoli che giudicassero la mia visione, scrissi a loro ciò che io avea nel mio sonno veduto. E cominciai allora questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *A ciascun’alma presa*.

A ciascun’alma presa e gentil core
nel cui cospetto ven lo dir presente,
in ciò che mi rescrivan suo parvente,
salute in lor segnor, cioè Amore. 4

Già eran quasi che atterzate l’ore
del tempo che onne s tella n’è lucente,
quando m’apparve Amor subitamente,
cui essenza membrar mi dà orrore. 8

Allegro mi sembrava Amor tenendo
meo core in mano, e ne le braccia avea
madonna involta in un drappo dormendo. 11

Poi la svegliava, e d’esto core ardendo
lei paventosa umilmente pascea:
appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo. 14

Questo sonetto si divide in due parti; che ne la prima parte saluto e domando risponsione, ne la seconda significo a che si dee rispondere. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *Già eran*.

A questo sonetto fue risposto da molti e di diverse sentenzie; tra li quali fue risponditore quelli cui io chiamo primo de li miei amici, e disse allora uno sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Vedeste, al mio parere, onne valore*. E questo fue quasi lo principio de l’amistà tra lui e me, quando elli seppe che io era quelli che li avea ciò mandato.

Lo verace giudicio del detto sogno non fue veduto allora per alcuno, ma ora è manifestissimo a li più semplici.

IV

Da questa visione innanzi cominciò lo mio spirito naturale ad essere impedito ne la sua operazione, però che l'anima era tutta data nel pensare di questa gentilissima; onde io divenni in picciolo tempo poi di sì fraile e debole condizione, che a molti amici pesava de la mia vista; e molti pieni d'invidia già si procacciavano di sapere di me quello che io volea del tutto celare ad altrui.

Ed io, accorgendomi del malvagio domandare che mi faceano, per la volontade d'Amore, lo quale mi comandava secondo lo consiglio de la ragione, rispondea loro che Amore era quelli che così m'avea governato. Dicea d'Amore, però che io portava nel viso tante de le sue insegne, che questo non si potea ricovrire.

E quando mi domandavano "Per cui t'ha così distrutto questo Amore?", ed io sorridendo li guardava, e nulla dicea loro.

V

Uno giorno avvenne che questa gentilissima sedea in parte ove s’udiano parole de la regina de la gloria, ed io era in luogo dal quale vedea la mia beatitudine; e nel mezzo di lei e di me per la retta linea sedea una gentile donna di molto piacevole aspetto, la quale mi mirava spesse volte, maravigliandosi del mio sguardare, che parea che sopra lei terminasse.

Onde molti s’accorsero de lo suo mirare; e in tanto vi fue posto mente, che, partendomi da questo luogo, mi sentio dicere appresso di me: “Vedi come cotale donna distrugge la persona di costui”; e nominandola, io intesi che dicea di colei che mezzo era stata ne la linea retta che movea da la gentilissima Beatrice e terminava ne li occhi miei.

Allora mi confortai molto, assicurandomi che lo mio secreto non era comunicato lo giorno altrui per mia vista. E mantenente pensai di fare di questa gentile donna schermo de la veritade; e tanto ne mostrai in poco tempo, che lo mio secreto fue creduto sapere da le più persone che di me ragionavano. Con questa donna mi celai alquanti anni e mesi; e per più fare credente altrui, feci per lei certe cosette per rima, le quali non è mio intendimento di scrivere qui, se non in quanto facesse a trattare di quella gentilissima Beatrice; e però le lascerò tutte, salvo che alcuna cosa ne scriverò che pare che sia loda di lei.

VI

Dico che in questo tempo che questa donna era schermo di tanto amore, quanto da la mia parte, sì mi venne una volontade di volere ricordare lo nome di quella gentilissima ed accompagnarlo di molti nomi di donne, e spezialmente del nome di questa gentile donna.

E presi li nomi di sessanta le più belle donne de la cittade ove la mia donna fue posta da l’altissimo sire, e compuosi una pistola sotto forma di serventese, la quale io non scriverò: e non n’avrei fatto menzione, se non per dire quello che, componendola, maravigliosamente addivenne, cioè che in alcuno altro numero non sofferse lo nome de la mia donna stare, se non in su lo nove, tra li nomi di queste donne.

VII

La donna co la quale io avea tanto tempo celata la mia volontade, convenne che si partisse de la sopradetta cittade e andasse in paese molto lontano; per che io, quasi sbigottito de la bella difesa che m'era venuta meno, assai me ne disconfortai, più che io medesimo non avrei creduto dinanzi.

E pensando che se de la sua partita io non parlasse alquanto dolorosamente, le persone sarebbero accorte più tosto de lo mio nascondere, propuosi di farne alcuna lamentanza in uno sonetto; lo quale io scriverò, acciò che la mia donna fue immediata cagione di certe parole che ne lo sonetto sono, sì come appare a chi lo intende. E allora dissi questo sonetto, che comincia: *O voi che per la via*.

O voi che per la via d'Amor passate,
attendete e guardate
s'elli è dolore alcun, quanto 'l mio, grave;
e prego sol ch'audir mi sofferiate,
e poi imaginate

s'io son d'ogni tormento ostale e chiave.
Amor, non già per mia poca bontate,
ma per sua nobiltate,
mi pose in vita sì dolce e soave,
ch'io mi sentia dir dietro spesse fiate:

"Deo, per qual dignitate
così leggiadro questi lo core have?".
Or ho perduta tutta mia baldanza
che si movea d'amoroso tesoro;
ond'io pover dimoro,

in guisa che di dir mi ven dottanza.
Sì che volendo far come coloro
che per vergogna celan lor mancanza,
di fuor mostro allegranza,
e dentro da lo core struggo e ploro.

Questo sonetto ha due parti principali; che ne la prima intendo chiamare li fedeli d'Amore per quelle parole di Geremia profeta che dicono: "O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus", e pregare che mi sofferino d'audire; ne la seconda narro là ove Amore m'avea posto, con altro intendimento che l'estreme parti del sonetto non mostrano, e dico che io hoe ciò perduto. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *Amor, non già*.

VIII

Appresso lo partire di questa gentile donna fue piacere del segnore de li angeli di chiamare a la sua gloria una donna giovane e di gentile aspetto molto, la quale fue assai graziosa in questa sopradetta cittade; lo cui corpo io vidi giacere sanza l'anima in mezzo di molte donne, le quali piangeano assai pietosamente.

Allora, ricordandomi che già l'avea veduta fare compagnia a quella gentilissima, non poteo sostenere alquante lagrime; anzi piangendo mi propuosi di dicere alquante parole de la sua morte, in guiderdone di ciò che alcuna fiata l'avea veduta con la mia donna.

E di ciò toccai alcuna cosa ne l'ultima parte de le parole che io ne dissi, sì come appare manifestamente a chi lo intende. E dissi allora questi due sonetti, li quali comincia lo primo: *Piangete, amanti*, e lo secondo: *Morte villana*.

Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore,
udendo qual cagion lui fa plorare.
Amor sente a Pietà donne chiamare,
mostrando amaro duol per li occhi fore, 4

perché villana Morte in gentil core
ha miso il suo crudele adoperare,
guastando ciò che al mondo è da laudare
in gentil donna sovra de l'onore. 8

Audite quanto Amor le fece orranza,
ch'io 'l vidi lamentare in forma vera
sovra la morta imagine avvenente; 11

e riguardava ver lo ciel sovente,
ove l'alma gentil già locata era,
che donna fu di sì gaia sembianza. 14

Questo primo sonetto si divide in tre parti: ne la prima chiamo e sollicito li fedeli d'Amore a piangere e dico che lo segnore loro piange, e dico 'udendo la cagione per che piange', acciò che s'acconcino più ad ascoltarmi; ne la seconda narro la cagione; ne la terza parlo d'alcuno onore che Amore fece a questa donna. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *Amor sente*; la terza quivi: *Audite*.

Morte villana, di pietà nemica,
di dolor madre antica,
giudicio incontastabile gravoso,
poi che hai data matera al cor doglioso
ond’io vado pensoso,

di te blasmar la lingua s’affatica.
E s’io di grazia ti voi far mendica,
convenesi ch’eo dica
lo tuo fallar d’onni torto tortoso,
non però ch’a la gente sia nascoso,

ma per farne cruccioso
chi d’amor per innanzi si notrica.
Dal secolo hai partita cortesia
e ciò ch’è in donna da pregiar vertute:
in gaia gioventute

distrutta hai l’amorosa leggiadria.
Più non voi discovrir qual donna sia
che per le propietà sue canosciute.
Chi non merta salute
non speri mai d’aver sua compagnia.

Questo sonetto si divide in quattro parti: ne la prima parte chiamo la Morte per certi suoi nomi propri; ne la seconda, parlando a lei, dico la cagione per che io mi muovo a biasimarla; ne la terza la vitupero; ne la quarta mi volgo a parlare a indiffinita persona, avvegna che quanto a lo mio intendimento sia diffinita. La seconda comincia quivi: *poi che hai data*; la terza quivi: *E s’io di grazia*; la quarta quivi: *Chi non merta salute*.

IX

Appresso la morte di questa donna alquanti die avvenne cosa per la quale me convenne partire de la sopradetta cittade e ire verso quelle parti dov'era la gentile donna ch'era stata mia difesa, avvegna che non tanto fosse lontano lo termine de lo mio andare quanto ella era.

E tutto ch'io fosse a la compagnia di molti quanto a la vista, l'andare mi dispiacea sì, che quasi li sospiri non poteano disfogare l'angoscia che lo cuore sentia, però ch'io mi dilungava de la mia beatitudine.

E però lo dolcissimo segnore, lo quale mi segnoreggiava per la vertù de la gentilissima donna, ne la mia imaginazione apparve come peregrino leggeramente vestito e di vili drappi.

Elli mi parea disbigottito, e guardava la terra, salvo che talora li suoi occhi mi parea che si volgessero ad uno fiume bello e corrente e chiarissimo, lo quale sen gia lungo questo cammino là ov'io era.

A me parve che Amore mi chiamasse, e dicessemi queste parole: "Io vegno da quella donna la quale è stata tua lunga difesa, e so che lo suo rivenire non sarà a gran tempi; e però quello cuore che io ti facea avere a lei, io l'ho meco, e portolo a donna la quale sarà tua difensione, come questa era".

E nominollami per nome, sì che io la conobbi bene. "Ma tuttavia, di queste parole ch'io t'ho ragionate se alcuna cosa ne dicessi, dille nel modo che per loro non si discernesse lo simulato amore che tu hai mostrato a questa e che ti converrà mostrare ad altri".

E dette queste parole, disparve questa mia imaginazione tutta subitamente per la grandissima parte che mi parve che Amore mi desse di sé; e, quasi cambiato ne la vista mia, cavalcai quel giorno pensoso molto e accompagnato da molti sospiri.

Appresso lo giorno cominciai di ciò questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Cavalcando*.

Cavalcando l'altr'ier per un cammino,
pensoso de l'andar che mi sgradia,
trovai Amore in mezzo de la via
in abito leggier di peregrino. 4

Ne la sembianza mi parea meschino,
come avesse perduto segnoria;

e sospirando pensoso venia,
per non veder la gente, a capo chino.

Quando mi vide, mi chiamò per nome,
e disse: “Io vegno di lontana parte,
ov’era lo tuo cor per mio volere;

e recolo a servir novo piacere”.
Allora presi di lui sì gran parte,
ch’elli disparve, e non m’accorsi come.

Questo sonetto ha tre parti: ne la prima parte dico sì com’io trovai Amore, e quale mi parea; ne la seconda dico quello ch’elli mi disse, avvegna che non compiutamente per tema ch’avea di discovrire lo mio secreto; ne la terza dico com’elli mi disparve. La seconda comincia quivi: *Quando mi vide*; la terza: *Allora presi*.

X

Appresso la mia ritornata mi misi a cercare di questa donna che lo mio segnore m’avea nominata ne lo cammino de li sospiri; e acciò che lo mio parlare sia più brieve, dico che in poco tempo la feci mia difesa tanto, che troppa gente ne ragionava oltre li termini de la cortesia; onde molte fiate mi pensava duramente.

E per questa cagione, cioè di questa soverchievole voce che parea che m’infamasse viziosamente, quella gentilissima, la quale fue distruggitrice di tutti li vizi e regina de le virtudi, passando per alcuna parte, mi negò lo suo dolcissimo salutare, ne lo quale stava tutta la mia beatitudine.

E uscendo alquanto del proposito presente, voglio dare a intendere quello che lo suo salutare in me vertuosamente operava.

XI

Dico che quando ella apparia da parte alcuna, per la speranza de la mirabile salute nullo nemico mi rimanea, anzi mi giugnea una fiamma di caritade, la quale mi facea perdonare a chiunque m'avesse offeso; e chi allora m'avesse domandato di cosa alcuna, la mia risponsione sarebbe stata solamente 'Amore', con viso vestito d'umilitade.

E quando ella fosse alquanto propinqua al salutare, uno spirito d'amore, distruggendo tutti li altri spiriti sensitivi, pingea fuori li deboletti spiriti del viso, e dicea loro: "Andate a onorare la donna vostra"; ed elli si rimanea nel luogo loro. E chi avesse voluto conoscere Amore, fare lo potea mirando lo tremare de li occhi miei.

E quando questa gentilissima salute salutava, non che Amore fosse tal mezzo che potesse obumbrare a me la intollerabile beatitudine, ma elli quasi per soverchio di dolcezza divenia tale, che lo mio corpo, lo quale era tutto allora sotto lo suo reggimento, molte volte si movea come cosa grave inanimata.

Sì che appare manifestamente che ne le sue salute abitava la mia beatitudine, la quale molte volte passava e redundava la mia capacitade.

XII

Ora, tornando al proposito, dico che poi che la mia beatitudine mi fue negata, mi giunse tanto dolore, che, partito me da le genti, in solinga parte andai a bagnare la terra d'amarissime lagrime.

E poi che alquanto mi fue sollenato questo lagrimare, misimi ne la mia camera, là ov'io potea lamentarmi sanza essere udito; e quivi, chiamando misericordia a la donna de la cortesia, e dicendo "Amore, aiuta lo tuo fedele", m'addormentai come un pargoletto battuto lagrimando.

Avvenne quasi nel mezzo de lo mio dormire che me parve vedere ne la mia camera lungo me sedere uno giovane vestito di bianchissime vestimenta, e pensando molto quanto a la vista sua, mi riguardava là ov'io giacea; e quando m'avea guardato alquanto, pareami che sospirando mi chiamasse, e diceami queste parole: "Fili mi, tempus est ut pretermictantur simulacra nostra".

Allora mi parea che io lo conoscesse, però che mi chiamava così come assai fiate ne li miei sonni m'avea già chiamato: e riguardandolo, parvemi che piangesse pietosamente, e parea che attendesse da me alcuna parola; ond'io, assicurandomi, cominciai a parlare così con esso: "Segnore de la nobiltade, e perché piangi tu?". E quelli mi dicea queste parole: "Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentie partes; tu autem non sic".

Allora, pensando a le sue parole, mi parea che m'avesse parlato molto oscuramente; sì ch'io mi sforzava di parlare, e diceali queste parole: "Che è ciò, segnore, che mi parli con tanta oscuritade?". E quelli mi dicea in parole volgari: "Non dimandare più che utile ti sia".

E però cominciai allora con lui a ragionare de la salute la quale mi fue negata, e domandailo de la cagione; onde in questa guisa da lui mi fue risposto: "Quella nostra Beatrice udio da certe persone di te ragionando, che la donna la quale io ti nominai nel cammino de li sospiri, ricevea da te alcuna noia; e però questa gentilissima, la quale è contraria di tutte le noie, non degnò salutare la tua persona, temendo non fosse noiosa.

Onde con ciò sia cosa che veracemente sia conosciuto per lei alquanto lo tuo secreto per lunga consuetudine, voglio che tu dichi certe parole per rima, ne le quali tu comprendi la forza che io tegno sopra te per lei, e come tu fosti suo tostamente da la tua puerizia. E di ciò chiama testimonio colui che lo sa, e come tu prieghi lui che li le dica; ed io, che son quelli, volentieri le ne ragionerò; e per questo sentirà ella la tua volontade, la quale sentendo, conoscerà le parole de li ingannati.

Queste parole fa che siano quasi un mezzo, sì che tu non parli a lei immediatamente, che non è degno; e no le mandare in parte, sanza me, ove potessero essere intese da lei, ma falle adornare di soave armonia, ne la quale io sarò tutte le volte che farà mestiere".

E dette queste parole, sì disparve, e lo mio sonno fue rotto. Onde io ricordandomi, trovai che questa visione m'era apparita ne la nona ora del die; e anzi ch'io uscisse di questa camera, propuosi di fare una ballata, ne la quale io seguitasse ciò che lo mio segnore m'avea imposto; e feci poi questa ballata, che comincia: *Ballata, i' voi*.

Ballata, i' voi che tu ritrovi Amore,
e con lui vade a madonna davante,
sì che la scusa mia, la qual tu cante,
ragioni poi con lei lo mio segnore.
Tu vai, ballata, sì cortesemente,

che sanza compagnia
dovresti avere in tutte parti ardire;
ma se tu vuoli andar sicuramente,
retrova l'Amor pria,
ché forse non è bon sanza lui gire;

però che quella che ti dee audire,
sì com'io credo, è ver di me adirata:
se tu di lui non fossi accompagnata,
leggeramente ti faria disnore.
Con dolze sono, quando se' con lui,

comincia este parole,
appresso che averai chesta pietate:
"Madonna, quelli che mi manda a vui,
quando vi piaccia, vole,
sed elli ha scusa, che la m'intendiate.

Amore è qui, che per vostra bieltate
lo face, come vol, vista cangiare:
dunque perché li fece altra guardare

pensatel voi, da che non mutò ‘l core”.
Dille: “Madonna, lo suo core è stato

con sì fermata fede,
che ‘n voi servir l’ha ‘mpronto onne pensero:
tosto fu vostro, e mai non s’è smagato”.
Sed ella non ti crede,
dì che domandi Amor, che sa lo vero:

ed a la fine falle umil preghero,
lo perdonare se le fosse a noia,
che mi comandi per messo ch’eo moia,
e vedrassi ubidir ben servidore.
E dì a colui ch’è d’ogni pietà chiave,

avante che sdonnei,
che le saprà contar mia ragion bona:
“Per grazia de la mia nota soave
reman tu qui con lei,
e del tuo servo ciò che vuoi ragiona;

e s’ella per tuo prego li perdona,
fa che li annunzi un bel sembiante pace”.
Gentil ballata mia, quando ti piace,
movi in quel punto che tu n’aggie onore.

Questa ballata in tre parti si divide: ne la prima dico a lei ov’ella vada, e confortola però che vada più sicura, e dico ne la cui compagnia si metta, se vuole sicuramente andare e sanza pericolo alcuno; ne la seconda dico quello che lei si pertiene di fare intendere; ne la terza la licenzio del gire quando vuole, raccomandando lo suo movimento ne le braccia de la fortuna. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *Con dolze sono*; la terza quivi: *Gentil ballata*.

Potrebbe già l’uomo opporre contra me e dicere che non sapesse a cui fosse lo mio parlare in seconda persona, però che la ballata non è altro che queste parole ched io parlo: e però dico che questo dubbio io lo intendo solvere e dichiarare in questo libello ancora in parte più dubbiosa; e allora intenda qui chi qui dubita, o chi qui volesse opporre in questo modo.

XIII

Appresso di questa soprascritta visione, avendo già dette le parole che Amore m’avea imposte a dire, mi cominciaro molti e diversi pensamenti a combattere e a tentare, ciascuno quasi indefensibilemente; tra li quali pensamenti quattro mi parea che ingombrassero più lo riposo de la vita.

L’uno de li quali era questo: buona è la signoria d’Amore, però che trae lo intendimento del suo fedele da tutte le vili cose.

L’altro era questo: non buona è la signoria d’Amore, però che quanto lo suo fedele più fede li porta, tanto più gravi e dolorosi punti li conviene passare.

L’altro era questo: lo nome d’Amore è sì dolce a udire, che impossibile mi pare che la sua propria operazione sia ne le più cose altro che dolce, con ciò sia cosa che li nomi seguitino le nominate cose, sì come è scritto: “Nomina sunt consequentia rerum”.

Lo quarto era questo: la donna per cui Amore ti stringe così, non è come l’altre donne, che leggeramente si muova del suo cuore.

E ciascuno mi combattea tanto, che mi facea stare quasi come colui che non sa per qual via pigli lo suo cammino, e che vuole andare e non sa onde se ne vada; e se io pensava di volere cercare una comune via di costoro, cioè là ove tutti s’accordassero, questa era via molto inimica verso me, cioè di chiamare e di mettermi ne le braccia de la Pietà.

E in questo stato dimorando, mi giunse volontade di scriverne parole rimate; e dissine allora questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Tutti li miei penser*.

Tutti li miei penser parlan d’Amore;
e hanno in lor sì gran varietate,
ch’altro mi fa voler sua potestate,
altro folle ragiona il suo valore,

altro sperando m’apporta dolzore,
altro pianger mi fa spesse fiate;
e sol s’accordano in cherer pietate,
tremando di paura che è nel core.

Ond’io non so da qual matera prenda;
e vorrei dire, e non so ch’io mi dica:
così mi trovo in amorosa erranza!

E se con tutti voi fare accordanza,
convenemi chiamar la mia nemica,
madonna la Pietà, che mi difenda. 14

Questo sonetto in quattro parti si può dividere: ne la prima dico e soppongo che tutti li miei pensieri sono d'Amore; ne la seconda dico che sono diversi, e narro la loro diversitade; ne la terza dico in che tutti pare che s'accordino; ne la quarta dico che volendo dire d'Amore, non so da qual parte pigli matera, e se la voglio pigliare da tutti, convene che io chiami la mia inimica, madonna la Pietade; e dico 'madonna' quasi per disdegnoso modo di parlare. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *e hanno in lor*; la terza quivi: *e sol s'accordano*; la quarta quivi: *Ond'io non so*.

XIV

Appresso la battaglia de li diversi pensieri avvenne che questa gentilissima venne in parte ove molte donne gentili erano adunate; a la qual parte io fui condotto per amica persona, credendosi fare a me grande piacere, in quanto mi menava là ove tante donne mostravano le loro bellezze.

Onde io, quasi non sappiendo a che io fossi menato, e fidandomi ne la persona la quale uno suo amico a l'estremitade de la vita condotto avea, dissi a lui: "Perché semo noi venuti a queste donne?".

Allora quelli mi disse: "Per fare sì ch'elle siano degnamente servite". E lo vero è che adunate quivi erano a la compagnia d'una gentile donna che disposata era lo giorno; e però, secondo l'usanza de la sopradetta cittade, convenia che le facessero compagnia nel primo sedere a la mensa che facea ne la magione del suo novello sposo. Sì che io, credendomi fare piacere di questo amico, propuosi di stare al servigio de le donne ne la sua compagnia.

E nel fine del mio proponimento mi parve sentire uno mirabile tremore incominciare nel mio petto da la sinistra parte e distendersi di subito per tutte le parti del mio corpo. Allora dico che io poggiai la mia persona simulatamente ad una pintura la quale circundava questa magione; e temendo non altri si fosse accorto del mio tremare, levai li occhi, e mirando le donne, vidi tra loro la gentilissima Beatrice.

Allora fuoro sì distrutti li miei spiriti per la forza che Amore prese veggendosi in tanta propinquitade a la gentilissima donna, che non ne rimasero in vita più che li spiriti del viso; e ancora questi rimasero fuori de li loro istrumenti, però che Amore volea stare nel loro nobilissimo luogo per vedere la mirabile donna.

E avvegna che io fossi altro che prima, molto mi dolea di questi spiritelli, che si lamentavano forte e diceano: "Se questi non ci infolgorasse così fuori del nostro luogo, noi potremmo stare a vedere la maraviglia di questa donna così come stanno li altri nostri pari".

Io dico che molte di queste donne, accorgendosi de la mia trasfigurazione, si cominciaro a maravigliare, e ragionando si gabbavano di me con questa gentilissima; onde lo ingannato amico di buona fede mi prese per la mano, e traendomi fuori de la veduta di queste donne, sì mi domandò che io avesse.

Allora io, riposato alquanto, e resurressiti li morti spiriti miei, e li discacciati rivenuti a le loro possessioni, dissi a questo mio amico queste parole: "Io tenni li piedi in quella parte de la vita di là da la quale non si puote ire più per intendimento di ritornare".

E partitomi da lui, mi ritornai ne la camera de le lagrime; ne la quale, piangendo e vergognandomi, fra me stesso dicea: “Se questa donna sapesse la mia condizione, io non credo che così gabbasse la mia persona, anzi credo che molta pietade le ne verrebbe”.

E in questo pianto stando, propuosi di dire parole, ne le quali, parlando a lei, significasse la cagione del mio trasfiguramento, e dicesse che io so bene ch’ella non è saputa, e che se fosse saputa, io credo che pietà ne giugnerebbe altrui; e propuosile di dire desiderando che venissero per avventura ne la sua audienza. E allora dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Con l’altre donne*.

Con l’altre donne mia vista gabbate,
e non pensate, donna, onde si mova
ch’io vi rassembri sì figura nova
quando riguardo la vostra beltate.

Se lo saveste, non poria Pietate
tener più contra me l’usata prova,
ché Amor, quando sì presso a voi mi trova,
prende baldanza e tanta securtate,

che fere tra’ miei spiriti paurosi,
e quale ancide, e qual pinge di fore,
sì che solo remane a veder vui:

ond’io mi cangio in figura d’altrui,
ma non sì ch’io non senta bene allore
li guai de li scacciati tormentosi.

Questo sonetto non divido in parti, però che la divisione non si fa se non per aprire la sentenzia de la cosa divisa; onde con ciò sia cosa che per la sua ragionata cagione assai sia manifesto, non ha mestiere di divisione.

Vero è che tra le parole dove si manifesta la cagione di questo sonetto, si scrivono dubbiose parole, cioè quando dico che Amore uccide tutti li miei spiriti, e li visivi rimangono in vita, salvo che fuori de li strumenti loro. E questo dubbio è impossibile a solvere a chi non fosse in simile grado fedele d’Amore; e a coloro che vi sono è manifesto ciò che solverebbe le dubitose parole: e però non è bene a me di dichiarare cotale dubitazione, acciò che lo mio parlare dichiarando sarebbe indarno, o vero di soperchio.

XV

Appresso la nuova trasfigurazione mi giunse uno pensamento forte, lo quale poco si partia da me, anzi continuamente mi riprendea, ed era di cotale ragionamento meco: “Poscia che tu pervieni a così dischernevole vista quando tu se’ presso di questa donna, perché pur cerchi di vedere lei? Ecco che tu fossi domandato da lei: che avrestù da rispondere, ponendo che tu avessi libera ciascuna tua vertude in quanto tu le rispondessi?”.

E a costui rispondea un altro, umile, pensero, e dicea: “S’io non perdessi le mie vertudi, e fossi libero tanto che io le potessi rispondere, io le direi, che sì tosto com’io imagino la sua mirabile bellezza, sì tosto mi giugne uno desiderio di vederla, lo quale è di tanta vertude, che uccide e distrugge ne la mia memoria ciò che contra lui si potesse levare; e però non mi ritraggono le passate passioni da cercare la veduta di costei”.

Onde io, mosso da cotali pensamenti, propuosi di dire certe parole, ne le quali, escusandomi a lei da cotale riprensione, ponesse anche di quello che mi diviene presso di lei; e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Ciò che m’incontra*.

Ciò che m’incontra, ne la mente more,
quand’i’ vegno a veder voi, bella gioia;
e quand’io vi son presso, i’ sento Amore
che dice: “Fuggi, se ‘l perir t’è noia”.

Lo viso mostra lo color del core,
che, tramortendo, ovunque po’ s’appoia;
e per la ebrietà del gran tremore
le pietre par che gridin: Moia, moia.

Peccato face chi allora mi vide,
se l’alma sbigottita non conforta,
sol dimostrando che di me li doglia,

per la pietà, che ‘l vostro gabbo ancide,
la qual si cria ne la vista morta
de li occhi, c’hanno di lor morte voglia.

Questo sonetto si divide in due parti: ne la prima dico la cagione per che non mi tengo di gire presso di questa donna; ne la seconda dico quello che mi diviene per andare presso di lei; e comincia questa parte quivi: e *quand'io vi son presso*.

E anche si divide questa seconda parte in cinque, secondo cinque diverse narrazioni: che ne la prima dico quello che Amore, consigliato da la ragione, mi dice quando le sono presso; ne la seconda manifesto lo stato del cuore per essemplo del viso; ne la terza dico sì come onne sicurtade mi viene meno; ne la quarta dico che pecca quelli che non mostra pietà di me, acciò che mi sarebbe alcuno conforto; ne l'ultima dico perché altri doverebbe avere pietà, e ciò è per la pietosa vista che ne li occhi mi giugne; la quale vista pietosa è distrutta, cioè non pare altrui, per lo gabbare di questa donna, la quale trae a sua simile operazione coloro che forse vederebbono questa pietà.

La seconda parte comincia quivi: Lo viso mostra; la terza quivi: *e per la ebrietà*; la quarta: *Peccato face*; la quinta: *per la pietà*.

XVI

Appresso ciò, che io dissi questo sonetto, mi mosse una volontade di dire anche parole, ne le quali io dicesse quattro cose ancora sopra lo mio stato, le quali non mi parea che fossero manifestate ancora per me.

La prima delle quali si è che molte volte io mi dolea, quando la mia memoria movesse la fantasia ad imaginare quale Amore mi facea.

La seconda si è che Amore spesse volte di subito m'assalia sì forte, che 'n me non rimanea altro di vita se non un pensero che parlava di questa donna.

La terza si è che quando questa battaglia d'Amore mi pugnava così, io mi movea quasi discolorito tutto per vedere questa donna, credendo che mi difendesse la sua veduta da questa battaglia, dimenticando quello che per appropinquare a tanta gentilezza m'addivenia.

La quarta si è come cotale veduta non solamente non mi difendea, ma finalmente disconfiggea la mia poca vita.

E però dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Spesse fiate*.

Spesse fiate vegnonmi a la mente
le oscure qualità ch'Amor mi dona,
e venmene pietà, sì che sovente
io dico: "Lasso!, avviene elli a persona?";

ch'Amor m'assale subitanamente,
sì che la vita quasi m'abbandona:
campami un spirto vivo solamente,
e que' riman, perché di voi ragiona.

Poscia mi sforzo, ché mi voglio atare;
e così smorto, d'onne valor voto,
vegno a vedervi, credendo guerire:

e se io levo li occhi per guardare,
nel cor mi si comincia uno tremoto,
che fa de' polsi l'anima partire.

Questo sonetto si divide in quattro parti, secondo che quattro cose sono in esso narrate; e però che sono di sopra ragionate, non m'intrametto se non di

distinguere le parti per li loro cominciamenti: onde dico che la seconda parte comincia quivi: *ch'Amor*; la terza quivi: *Poscia mi sforzo*; la quarta quivi: *e se io levo*.

XVII

Poi che dissi questi tre sonetti, ne li quali parlai a questa donna, però che fuoro narratori di tutto quasi lo mio stato, credendomi tacere e non dire più, però che mi parea di me assai avere manifestato, avvegna che sempre poi tacesse di dire a lei, a me convenne ripigliare matera nuova e più nobile che la passata.

E però che la cagione de la nuova matera è dilettevole a udire, la dicerò, quanto potrò più brievemente.

XVIII

Con ciò sia cosa che per la vista mia molte persone avessero compreso lo secreto del mio cuore, certe donne, le quali adunate s'erano dilettandosi l'una ne la compagnia de l'altra, sapeano bene lo mio cuore, però che ciascuna di loro era stata a molte mie sconfitte; e io passando appresso di loro, sì come da la fortuna menato, fui chiamato da una di queste gentili donne.

La donna che m'avea chiamato era donna di molto leggiadro parlare; sì che quand'io fui giunto dinanzi da loro, e vidi bene che la mia gentilissima donna non era con esse, rassicurandomi le salutai, e domandai che piacesse loro.

Le donne erano molte, tra le quali n'avea certe che si rideano tra loro. Altre v'erano che mi guardavano, aspettando che io dovessi dire. Altre v'erano che parlavano tra loro. De le quali una, volgendo li suoi occhi verso me e chiamandomi per nome, disse queste parole: "A che fine ami tu questa tua donna, poi che tu non puoi sostenere la sua presenza? Dilloci, ché certo lo fine di cotale amore conviene che sia novissimo". E poi che m'ebbe dette queste parole, non solamente ella, ma tutte l'altre cominciaro ad attendere in vista la mia risponsione.

Allora dissi queste parole loro: "Madonne, lo fine del mio amore fue già lo saluto di questa donna, forse di cui voi intendete, e in quello dimorava la beatitudine, ché era fine di tutti li miei desiderii. Ma poi che le piacque di negarlo a me, lo mio segnore Amore, la sua merzede, ha posto tutta la mia beatitudine in quello che non mi puote venire meno".

Allora queste donne cominciaro a parlare tra loro; e sì come talora vedemo cadere l'acqua mischiata di bella neve, così mi parea udire le loro parole uscire mischiate di sospiri.

E poi che alquanto ebbero parlato tra loro, anche mi disse questa donna che m'avea prima parlato, queste parole: "Noi ti preghiamo che tu ne dichi ove sta questa tua beatitudine". Ed io, rispondendo lei, dissi cotanto: "In quelle parole che lodano la donna mia".

Allora mi rispuose questa che mi parlava: "Se tu ne dicessi vero, quelle parole che tu n'hai dette in notificando la tua condizione, avrestù operate con altro intendimento".

Onde io, pensando a queste parole, quasi vergognoso mi partio da loro, e venia dicendo fra me medesimo: "Poi che è tanta beatitudine in quelle parole che lodano la mia donna, perché altro parlare è stato lo mio?".

E però propuosi di prendere per matera de lo mio parlare sempre mai quello che fosse loda di questa gentilissima; e pensando molto a ciò, pareami avere

impresa troppo alta matera quanto a me, sì che non ardia di cominciare; e così dimorai alquanti dì con disiderio di dire e con paura di cominciare.

XIX

Avvenne poi che passando per uno cammino lungo lo quale sen gia uno rivo chiaro molto, a me giunse tanta volontade di dire, che io cominciai a pensare lo modo ch'io tenesse; e pensai che parlare di lei non si convenia che io facesse, se io non parlasse a donne in seconda persona, e non ad ogni donna, ma solamente a coloro che sono gentili e che non sono pure femmine.

Allora dico che la mia lingua parlò quasi come per se stessa mossa, e disse: *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*.

Queste parole io ripuosi ne la mente con grande letizia, pensando di prenderle per mio cominciamento; onde poi, ritornato a la sopradetta cittade, pensando alquanti die, cominciai una canzone con questo cominciamento, ordinata nel modo che si vedrà di sotto ne la sua divisione. La canzone comincia: *Donne ch'avete*.

Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore,
i' vo' con voi de la mia donna dire,
non perch'io creda sua laude finire,
ma ragionar per isfogar la mente.
Io dico che pensando il suo valore,

Amor sì dolce mi si fa sentire,
che s'io allora non perdessi ardire,
farei parlando innamorar la gente.
E io non vo' parlar sì altamente,
ch'io divenisse per temenza vile;

ma tratterò del suo stato gentile
a respetto di lei leggeramente,
donne e donzelle amorose, con vui,
ché non è cosa da parlarne altrui.
Angelo clama in divino intelletto

e dice: "Sire, nel mondo si vede
maraviglia ne l'atto che procede
d'un'anima che 'nfin qua su risplende".

Lo cielo, che non have altro difetto
che d’aver lei, al suo segnor la chiede,

e ciascun santo ne grida merzede.
Sola Pietà nostra parte difende,
ché parla Dio, che di madonna intende:
“Diletti miei, or sofferite in pace
che vostra spene sia quanto me piace

là ‘v’ è alcun che perder lei s’attende,
e che dirà ne lo inferno: O mal nati,
io vidi la speranza de’ beati”.
Madonna è disiata in sommo cielo:
or voi di sua virtù farvi savere.

Dico, qual vuol gentil donna parere
vada con lei, che quando va per via,
gitta nei cor villani Amore un gelo,
per che onne lor pensero agghiaccia e pere;
e qual soffrisse di starla a vedere

diverria nobil cosa, o si morria.
E quando trova alcun che degno sia
di veder lei, quei prova sua vertute,
ché li avvien, ciò che li dona, in salute,
e sì l’umilia, ch’ogni offesa oblia.

Ancor l’ha Dio per maggior grazia dato
che non pò mal finir chi l’ha parlato.
Dice di lei Amor: “Cosa mortale
come esser pò sì adorna e sì pura?”.
Poi la reguarda, e fra se stesso giura

che Dio ne ‘ntenda di far cosa nova.
Color di perle ha quasi, in forma quale
convene a donna aver, non for misura:
ella è quanto de ben pò far natura;
per essemplo di lei bieltà si prova.

De li occhi suoi, come ch’ella li mova,
escono spirti d’amore inflammati,
che feron li occhi a qual che allor la guati,
e passan sì che ‘l cor ciascun retrova:
voi le vedete Amor pinto nel viso,

là ‘ve non pote alcun mirarla fiso.
Canzone, io so che tu girai parlando
a donne assai, quand’io t’avrò avanzata.
Or t’ammonisco, perch’io t’ho allevata
per figliuola d’Amor giovane e piana,

che là ‘ve giugni tu dichi pregando:
“Insegnatemi gir, ch’io son mandata
a quella di cui laude so’ adornata”.
E se non vuoli andar sì come vana,
non restare ove sia gente villana:

ingegnati, se puoi, d’esser palese
solo con donne o con omo cortese,
che ti merranno là per via tostana.
Tu troverai Amor con esso lei;
raccomandami a lui come tu dei.

Questa canzone, acciò che sia meglio intesa, la dividerò più artificiosamente che l’altre cose di sopra. E però prima ne fo tre parti: la prima parte è proemio de le sequenti parole; la seconda è lo intento trattato; la terza è quasi una serviziale de le precedenti parole. La seconda comincia quivi: *Angelo clama*; la terza quivi: *Canzone, io so che*.

La prima parte si divide in quattro: ne la prima dico a cu’ io dicer voglio de la mia donna, e perché io voglio dire; ne la seconda dico quale me pare avere a me stesso quand’io penso lo suo valore, e com’io direi s’io non perdessi l’ardimento; ne la terza dico come credo dire di lei, acciò ch’io non sia impedito da viltà; ne la quarta, ridicendo anche a cui ne intenda dire, dico la cagione per che dico a loro. La seconda comincia quivi: *Io dico*; la terza quivi: *E io non vo’ parlar*; la quarta: *donne e donzelle*.

Poscia quando dico: Angelo clama, comincio a trattare di questa donna. E dividesi questa parte in due: ne la prima dico che di lei si comprende in cielo; ne la seconda dico che di lei si comprende in terra, quivi: *Madonna è disiata*.

Questa seconda parte si divide in due; che ne la prima dico di lei quanto da la parte de la nobilitade de la sua anima, narrando alquanto de le sue vertudi effettive che de la sua anima procedeano; ne la seconda dico di lei quanto da la parte de la nobilitade del suo corpo, narrando alquanto de le sue bellezze, quivi: *Dice di lei Amor*.

Questa seconda parte si divide in due; che ne la prima dico d'alquante bellezze che sono secondo tutta la persona; ne la seconda dico d'alquante bellezze che sono secondo diterminata parte de la persona, quivi: *De li occhi suoi*.

Questa seconda parte si divide in due; che ne l'una dico degli occhi, li quali sono principio d'amore; ne la seconda dico de la bocca, la quale è fine d'amore. E acciò che quinci si lievi ogni vizioso pensiero, ricordisi chi ci legge, che di sopra è scritto che lo saluto di questa donna, lo quale era de le operazioni de la bocca sua, fue fine de li miei desiderii mentre ch'io lo potei ricevere.

Poscia quando dico: *Canzone, io so che tu*, aggiungo una stanza quasi come ancella de l'altre, ne la quale dico quello che di questa mia canzone desidero; e però che questa ultima parte è lieve a intendere, non mi travaglio di più divisioni.

Dico bene che, a più aprire lo intendimento di questa canzone, si converrebbe usare di più minute divisioni; ma tuttavia chi non è di tanto ingegno che per queste che sono fatte la possa intendere, a me non dispiace se la mi lascia stare, ché certo io temo d'avere a troppi comunicato lo suo intendimento pur per queste divisioni che fatte sono, s'elli avvenisse che molti le potessero audire.

XX

Appresso che questa canzone fue alquanto divolgata tra le genti, con ciò fosse cosa che alcuno amico l'udisse, volontade lo mosse a pregare me che io li dovesse dire che è Amore, avendo forse per l'udite parole speranza di me oltre che degna.

Onde io, pensando che appresso di cotale trattato bello era trattare alquanto d'Amore, e pensando che l'amico era da servire, propuosi di dire parole ne le quali io trattassi d'Amore; e allora dissi questo sonetto, lo qual comincia: *Amore e 'l cor gentil*.

Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa,
sì come il saggio in suo dittare pone,
e così esser l'un sanza l'altro osa
com'alma razional sanza ragione.

Falli natura quand'è amorosa,
Amor per sire e 'l cor per sua magione,
dentro la qual dormendo si riposa
tal volta poca e tal lunga stagione.

Bieltate appare in saggia donna pui,
che piace a gli occhi sì, che dentro al core
nasce un disio de la cosa piacente;

e tanto dura talora in costui,
che fa svegliar lo spirito d'Amore.
E simil face in donna omo valente.

Questo sonetto si divide in due parti: ne la prima dico di lui in quanto è in potenzia; ne la seconda dico di lui in quanto di potenzia si riduce in atto. La seconda comincia quivi: *Bieltate appare*.

La prima si divide in due: ne la prima dico in che suggetto sia questa potenzia; ne la seconda dico sì come questo suggetto e questa potenzia siano produtti in essere, e come l'uno guarda l'altro come forma materia.

La seconda comincia quivi: *Falli natura*. Poscia quando dico: *Bieltate appare*, dico come questa potenzia si riduce in atto; e prima come si riduce in uomo, poi come si riduce in donna, quivi: *E simil face in donna*.

XXI

Poscia che trattai d’Amore ne la soprascritta rima, vennemi volontade di volere dire anche, in loda di questa gentilissima, parole, per le quali io mostrasse come per lei si sveglia questo Amore, e come non solamente si sveglia là ove dorme, ma là ove non è in potenzia, ella, mirabilemente operando, lo fa venire. E allora dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Ne li occhi porta*.

Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore,
per che si fa gentil ciò ch’ella mira;
ov’ella passa, ogn’om ver lei si gira,
e cui saluta fa tremar lo core,

sì che, bassando il viso, tutto smore,
e d’ogni suo difetto allor sospira:
fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira.
Aiutatemi, donne, farle onore.

Ogne dolcezza, ogne pensero umile
nasce nel core a chi parlar la sente,
ond’è laudato chi prima la vide.

Quel ch’ella par quando un poco sorride,
non si pò dicer né tenere a mente,
sì è novo miracolo e gentile.

Questo sonetto si ha tre parti: ne la prima dico sì come questa donna riduce questa potenzia in atto secondo la nobilissima parte de li suoi occhi; e ne la terza dico questo medesimo secondo la nobilissima parte de la sua bocca; e intra queste due parti è una particella, ch’è quasi domandatrice d’aiuto a la precedente parte e a la sequente, e comincia quivi: *Aiutatemi, donne*. La terza comincia quivi: *Ogne dolcezza*.

La prima si divide in tre; che ne la prima parte dico sì come virtuosamente fae gentile tutto ciò che vede, e questo è tanto a dire quanto inducere Amore in potenzia là ove non è; ne la seconda dico come reduce in atto Amore ne li cuori

di tutti coloro cui vede; ne la terza dico quello che poi virtuosamente adopera ne' loro cuori. La seconda comincia quivi: *ov'ella passa*; la terza quivi: *e cui saluta*.

Poscia quando dico: *Aiutatemi, donne*, do a intendere a cui la mia intenzione è di parlare, chiamando le donne che m'aiutino onorare costei.

Poscia quando dico: *Ogne dolcezza*, dico quello medesimo che detto è ne la prima parte, secondo due atti de la sua bocca; l'uno de li quali è lo suo dolcissimo parlare, e l'altro lo suo mirabile riso; salvo che non dico di questo ultimo come adopera ne li cuori altrui, però che la memoria non puote ritenere lui né sua operazione.

XXII

Appresso ciò non molti dì passati, sì come piacque al glorioso sire lo quale non negoe la morte a sé, colui che era stato genitore di tanta maraviglia quanta si vedea ch'era questa nobilissima Beatrice, di questa vita uscendo, a la gloria etternale se ne gio veracemente.

Onde con ciò sia cosa che cotale partire sia doloroso a coloro che rimangono e sono stati amici di colui che se ne va; e nulla sia sì intima amistade come da buon padre a buon figliuolo e da buon figliuolo a buon padre; e questa donna fosse in altissimo grado di bontade, e lo suo padre, sì come da molti si crede e vero è, fosse bono in alto grado; manifesto è che questa donna fue amarissimamente piena di dolore.

E con ciò sia cosa che, secondo l'usanza de la sopradetta cittade, donne con donne e uomini con uomini s'adunino a cotale tristizia, molte donne s'adunaro colà dove questa Beatrice piangea pietosamente: onde io veggendo ritornare alquante donne da lei, udio dicere loro parole di questa gentilissima, com'ella si lamentava; tra le quali parole udio che diceano: "Certo ella piange sì, che quale la mirasse doverebbe morire di pietade".

Allora trapassaro queste donne; e io rimasi in tanta tristizia, che alcuna lagrima talora bagnava la mia faccia, onde io mi ricopria con porre le mani spesso a li miei occhi; e se non fosse ch'io attendea audire anche di lei, però ch'io era in luogo onde se ne giano la maggiore parte di quelle donne che da lei si partiano, io mi sarei nascoso incontanente che le lagrime m'aveano assalito.

E però dimorando ancora nel medesimo luogo, donne anche passaro presso di me, le quali andavano ragionando tra loro queste parole: "Chi dee mai essere lieta di noi, che avemo udita parlare questa donna così pietosamente?".

Appresso costoro passaro altre donne, che veniano dicendo: "Questi ch'è qui piange né più né meno come se l'avesse veduta, come noi avemo". Altre dipoi diceano di me: "Vedi questi che non pare esso, tal è divenuto!".

E così passando queste donne, udio parole di lei e di me in questo modo che detto è. Onde io poi, pensando, propuosi di dire parole, acciò che degnamente avea cagione di dire, ne le quali parole io conchiudesse tutto ciò che inteso avea da queste donne; e però che volentieri l'averei domandate, se non mi fosse stata riprensione, presi tanta matera di dire come s'io l'avesse domandate ed elle m'avessero risposto.

E feci due sonetti; che nel primo domando in quello modo che voglia mi giunse di domandare; ne l'altro dico la loro risponsione, pigliando ciò ch'io udio da loro

sì come lo mi avessero detto rispondendo. E comincia lo primo: *Voi che portate la* sembianza umile, e l'altro: Se' tu colui c'hai trattato sovente.

Voi che portate la sembianza umile,
con li occhi bassi, mostrando dolore,
onde venite che 'l vostro colore
par divenuto de pietà simile? 4

Vedeste voi nostra donna gentile
bagnar nel viso suo di pianto Amore?
Ditelmi, donne, che 'l mi dice il core,
perch'io vi veggio andar sanz'atto vile. 8

E se venite da tanta pietate,
piacciavi di restar qui meco alquanto,
e qual che sia di lei, nol mi celate. 11

Io veggio li occhi vostri c'hanno pianto,
e veggiovi tornar sì sfigurate,
che 'l cor mi triema di vederne tanto. 14

Questo sonetto si divide in due parti: ne la prima chiamo e domando queste donne se vegnono da lei, dicendo loro che io lo credo, però che tornano quasi ingentilite; ne la seconda le prego che mi dicano di lei. La seconda comincia quivi: *E se venite*.

Qui appresso è l'altro sonetto, sì come dinanzi avemo narrato.

Se' tu colui c'hai trattato sovente
di nostra donna, sol parlando a nui?
Tu risomigli a la voce ben lui,
ma la figura ne par d'altra gente. 18

E perché piangi tu sì coralmente,
che fai di te pietà venire altrui?
Vedestù pianger lei, che tu non pui
punto celar la dolorosa mente? 22

Lascia piangere noi e triste andare
(e fa peccato chi mai ne conforta),
che nel suo pianto l’udimmo parlare.

Ell’ha nel viso la pietà sì scorta,
che qual l’avesse voluta mirare
sarebbe innanzi lei piangendo morta.

Questo sonetto ha quattro parti, secondo che quattro modi di parlare ebbero in loro le donne per cui rispondo; e però che sono di sopra assai manifesti, non m’intrametto di narrare la sentenzia de le parti, e però le distinguo solamente. La seconda comincia quivi: *E perché piangi*; la terza: *Lascia piangere noi*; la quarta: *Ell’ha nel viso*.

XXIII

Appresso ciò per pochi dì avvenne che in alcuna parte de la mia persona mi giunse una dolorosa infermitade, onde io continuamente soffersi per nove dì amarissima pena; la quale mi condusse a tanta debolezza, che me convenia stare come coloro li quali non si possono muovere.

Io dico che ne lo nono giorno, sentendome dolere quasi intollerabilemente, a me giunse uno pensero lo quale era de la mia donna.

E quando ei pensato alquanto di lei, ed io ritornai pensando a la mia debilitata vita; e veggendo come leggiero era lo suo durare, ancora che sana fosse, sì cominciai a piangere fra me stesso di tanta miseria. Onde, sospirando forte, dicea fra me medesimo: “Di necessitade convene che la gentilissima Beatrice alcuna volta si muoia”.

E però mi giunse uno sì forte smarrimento, che chiusi li occhi e cominciai a travagliare sì come farnetica persona ed a imaginare in questo modo: che ne lo incominciamento de lo errare che fece la mia fantasia, apparvero a me certi visi di donne scapigliate, che mi diceano: “Tu pur morrai”. E poi, dopo queste donne, m’apparvero certi visi diversi e orribili a vedere, li quali mi diceano: “Tu se’ morto”.

Così cominciando ad errare la mia fantasia, venni a quello ch’io non sapea ove io mi fosse; e vedere mi parea donne andare scapigliate piangendo per via, maravigliosamente triste; e pareami vedere lo sole oscurare, sì che le stelle si mostravano di colore ch’elle mi faceano giudicare che piangessero; e pareami che li uccelli volando per l’aria cadessero morti, e che fossero grandissimi terremuoti.

E maravigliandomi in cotale fantasia, e paventando assai, imaginai alcuno amico che mi venisse a dire: “Or non sai? la tua mirabile donna è partita di questo secolo”. Allora cominciai a piangere molto pietosamente; e non solamente piangea ne la imaginazione, ma piangea con li occhi, bagnandoli di vere lagrime.

Io imaginava di guardare verso lo cielo, e pareami vedere moltitudine d’angeli li quali tornassero in suso, ed aveano dinanzi da loro una nebuletta bianchissima. A me parea che questi angeli cantassero gloriosamente, e le parole del loro canto mi parea udire che fossero queste: *Osanna in excelsis*; e altro non mi parea udire.

Allora mi parea che lo cuore, ove era tanto amore, mi dicesse: “Vero è che morta giace la nostra donna”. E per questo mi parea andare per vedere lo corpo ne lo quale era stata quella nobilissima e beata anima; e fue sì forte la erronea

fantasia, che mi mostrò questa donna morta: e pareami che donne la covrissero, cioè la sua testa, con uno bianco velo; e pareami che la sua faccia avesse tanto aspetto d'umilitade, che parea che dicesse: "Io sono a vedere lo principio de la pace".

In questa imaginazione mi giunse tanta umilitade per vedere lei, che io chiamava la Morte, e dicea: "Dolcissima Morte, vieni a me, e non m'essere villana, però che tu dei essere gentile, in tal parte se' stata! Or vieni a me, ché molto ti disidero; e tu lo vedi, ché io porto già lo tuo colore".

E quando io avea veduto compiere tutti li dolorosi mestieri che a le corpora de li morti s'usano di fare, mi parea tornare ne la mia camera, e quivi mi parea guardare verso lo cielo; e sì forte era la mia imaginazione, che piangendo incominciai a dire con verace voce: "Oi anima bellissima, come è beato colui che ti vede!".

E dicendo io queste parole con doloroso singulto di pianto, e chiamando la Morte che venisse a me, una donna giovane e gentile, la quale era lungo lo mio letto, credendo che lo mio piangere e le mie parole fossero solamente per lo dolore de la mia infermitade, con grande paura cominciò a piangere.

Onde altre donne che per la camera erano s'accorsero di me, che io piangea, per lo pianto che vedeano fare a questa; onde faccendo lei partire da me, la quale era meco di propinquissima sanguinitade congiunta, elle si trassero verso me per isvegliarmi, credendo che io sognasse, e diceanmi: "Non dormire più", e "Non ti sconfortare".

E parlandomi così, sì mi cessò la forte fantasia entro in quello punto ch'io volea dicere: "O Beatrice, benedetta sie tu"; e già detto avea "O Beatrice", quando riscotendomi apersi li occhi, e vidi che io era ingannato. E con tutto che io chiamasse questo nome, la mia voce era sì rotta dal singulto del piangere, che queste donne non mi pottero intendere, secondo il mio parere; e avvegna che io vergognasse molto, tuttavia per alcuno ammonimento d'Amore mi rivolsi a loro.

E quando mi videro, cominciaro a dire: "Questi pare morto", e a dire tra loro: "Proccuriamo di confortarlo"; onde molte parole mi diceano da confortarmi, e talora mi domandavano di che io avesse avuto paura.

Onde io, essendo alquanto riconfortato, e conosciuto lo fallace imaginare, rispuosi a loro: "Io vi diroe quello ch'i' hoe avuto". Allora, cominciandomi dal principio infino a la fine, dissi loro quello che veduto avea, tacendo lo nome di questa gentilissima.

Onde poi, sanato di questa infermitade, propuosi di dire parole di questo che m'era addivenuto, però che mi parea che fosse amorosa cosa da udire; e però ne dissi questa canzone: *Donna pietosa e di novella etate*, ordinata sì come manifesta la infrascritta divisione.

Donna pietosa e di novella etate,
adorna assai di gentilezze umane,
ch’era là ‘v’io chiamava spesso Morte,
veggendo li occhi miei pien di pietate,
e ascoltando le parole vane,

si mosse con paura a pianger forte.
E altre donne, che si fuoro accorte
di me per quella che meco piangia,
fecer lei partir via,
e appressarsi per farmi sentire.

Qual dicea: “Non dormire”,
e qual dicea: “Perché sì ti sconforte?”
Allor lassai la nova fantasia,
chiamando il nome de la donna mia.
Era la voce mia sì dolorosa

e rotta sì da l’angoscia del pianto,
ch’io solo intesi il nome nel mio core;
e con tutta la vista vergognosa
ch’era nel viso mio giunta cotanto,
mi fece verso lor volgere Amore.

Elli era tale a veder mio colore,
che facea ragionar di morte altrui:
“Deh, consoliam costui”
pregava l’una l’altra umilemente;
e dicevan sovente:

“Che vedestù, che tu non hai valore?”.
E quando un poco confortato fui,
io dissi: “Donne, dicerollo a vui.
Mentr’io pensava la mia frale vita,
e vedea ‘l suo durar com’è leggiero,

piansemi Amor nel core, ove dimora;
per che l’anima mia fu sì smarrita,

che sospirando dicea nel pensero:
- Ben converrà che la mia donna mora. -
Io presi tanto smarrimento allora,

ch’io chiusi li occhi vilmente gravati,
e furon sì smagati
li spirti miei, che ciascun giva errando;
e poscia imaginando,
di caunoscenza e di verità fora,

visi di donne m’apparver crucciati,
che mi dicean pur: - Morra’ti, morra’ti. -
Poi vidi cose dubitose molte,
nel vano imaginare ov’io entrai;
ed esser mi parea non so in qual loco,

e veder donne andar per via disciolte,
qual lagrimando, e qual traendo guai,
che di tristizia saettavan foco.
Poi mi parve vedere a poco a poco
turbar lo sole e apparir la stella,

e pianger elli ed ella;
cader li augelli volando per l’are,
e la terra tremare;
ed omo apparve scolorito e fioco,
dicendomi: - Che fai? non sai novella?

morta è la donna tua, ch’era sì bella. -
Levava li occhi miei bagnati in pianti,
e vedea, che parean pioggia di manna,
li angeli che tornavan suso in cielo,
e una nuvoletta avean davanti,

dopo la qual gridavan tutti: Osanna;
e s’altro avesser detto, a voi dire’lo.
Allor diceva Amor: - Più nol ti celo;
vieni a veder nostra donna che giace. -
Lo imaginar fallace

mi condusse a veder madonna morta;
e quand’io l’avea scorta,
vedea che donne la covrian d’un velo;
ed avea seco umilità verace,
che parea che dicesse: - Io sono in pace. -

Io divenia nel dolor sì umile,
veggendo in lei tanta umiltà formata,
ch’io dicea: - Morte, assai dolce ti tegno;
tu dei omai esser cosa gentile,
poi che tu se’ ne la mia donna stata,

e dei aver pietate e non disdegno.
Vedi che sì desideroso vegno
d’esser de’ tuoi, ch’io ti somiglio in fede.
Vieni, ché ‘l cor te chiede. -
Poi mi partia, consumato ogne duolo;

e quand’io era solo,
dicea, guardando verso l’alto regno:
- Beato, anima bella, chi te vede! -
Voi mi chiamaste allor, vostra merzede”.

Questa canzone ha due parti: ne la prima dico, parlando a indiffinita persona, come io fui levato d’una vana fantasia da certe donne, e come promisi loro di dirla; ne la seconda dico come io dissi a loro. La seconda comincia quivi: *Mentr’io pensava*.

La prima parte si divide in due: ne la prima dico quello che certe donne, e che una sola, dissero e fecero per la mia fantasia quanto è dinanzi che io fossi tornato in verace condizione; ne la seconda dico quello che queste donne mi dissero poi che io lasciai questo farneticare; e comincia questa parte quivi: *Era la voce mia*.

Poscia quando dico: *Mentr’io pensava*, dico come io dissi loro questa mia imaginazione. Ed intorno a ciò foe due parti: ne la prima dico per ordine questa imaginazione; ne la seconda, dicendo a che ora mi chiamaro, le ringrazio chiusamente; e comincia quivi questa parte: *Voi mi chiamaste*.

XXIV

Appresso questa vana imaginazione, avvenne uno die che, sedendo io pensoso in alcuna parte, ed io mi sentio cominciare un tremuoto nel cuore, così come se io fosse stato presente a questa donna.

Allora dico che mi giunse una imaginazione d'Amore; che mi parve vederlo venire da quella parte ove la mia donna stava, e pareami che lietamente mi dicesse nel cor mio: "Pensa di benedicere lo dì che io ti presi, però che tu lo dei fare". E certo me parea avere lo cuore sì lieto, che me non parea che fosse lo mio cuore, per la sua nuova condizione.

E poco dopo queste parole, che lo cuore mi disse con la lingua d'Amore, io vidi venire verso me una gentile donna, la quale era di famosa bieltade, e fue già molto donna di questo primo mio amico. E lo nome di questa donna era Giovanna, salvo che per la sua bieltade, secondo che altri crede, imposto l'era nome Primavera; e così era chiamata. E appresso lei, guardando, vidi venire la mirabile Beatrice.

Queste donne andaro presso di me così l'una appresso l'altra, e parve che Amore mi parlasse nel cuore, e dicesse: "Quella prima è nominata Primavera solo per questa venuta d'oggi; ché io mossi lo imponitore del nome a chiamarla così Primavera, cioè prima verrà lo die che Beatrice si mosterrà dopo la imaginazione del suo fedele. E se anche vogli considerare lo primo nome suo, tanto è quanto dire 'prima verrà', però che lo suo nome Giovanna è da quello Giovanni lo quale precedette la verace luce, dicendo: 'Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini'".

Ed anche mi parve che mi dicesse, dopo, queste parole: "E chi volesse sottilmente considerare, quella Beatrice chiamerebbe Amore, per molta simiglianza che ha meco".

Onde io poi, ripensando, propuosi di scrivere per rima a lo mio primo amico (tacendomi certe parole le quali pareano da tacere), credendo io che ancor lo suo cuore mirasse la bieltade di questa Primavera gentile; e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Io mi senti' svegliar*.

Io mi senti' svegliar dentro a lo core
un spirito amoroso che dormia:
e poi vidi venir da lungi Amore
allegro sì, che appena il conoscia, 4

dicendo: “Or pensa pur di farmi onore”;
e ‘n ciascuna parola sua ridia.
E poco stando meco il mio segnore,
guardando in quella parte onde venia,

io vidi monna Vanna e monna Bice
venire inver lo loco là ‘v’io era,
l’una appresso de l’altra maraviglia;

e sì come la mente mi ridice,
Amor mi disse: “Quell’è Primavera,
e quell’ha nome Amor, sì mi somiglia”.

Questo sonetto ha molte parti: la prima delle quali dice come io mi senti’ svegliare lo tremore usato nel cuore, e come parve che Amore m’apparisse allegro nel mio cuore da lunga parte; la seconda dice come me parea che Amore mi dicesse nel mio cuore, e quale mi parea; la terza dice come, poi che questi fue alquanto stato meco cotale, io vidi e udio certe cose. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *dicendo: Or pensa*; la terza quivi: *E poco stando*.

La terza parte si divide in due: ne la prima dico quello che io vidi; ne la seconda dico quello che io udio. La seconda comincia quivi: *Amor mi disse*.

XXV

Potrebbe qui dubitare persona degna da dichiararle onne dubitazione, e dubitare potrebbe di ciò, che io dico d'Amore come se fosse una cosa per sé, e non solamente sustanzia intelligente, ma sì come fosse sustanzia corporale: la quale cosa, secondo la veritate, è falsa; ché Amore non è per sé sì come sustanzia, ma è uno accidente in sustanzia.

E che io dica di lui come se fosse corpo, ancora sì come se fosse uomo, appare per tre cose che dico di lui. Dico che lo vidi venire; onde, con ciò sia cosa che venire dica moto locale, e localmente mobile per sé, secondo lo Filosofo, sia solamente corpo, appare che io ponga Amore essere corpo. Dico anche di lui che ridea, e anche che parlava; le quali cose paiono essere proprie de l'uomo, e spezialmente essere risibile; e però appare ch'io ponga lui essere uomo.

A cotale cosa dichiarare, secondo che è buono a presente, prima è da intendere che anticamente non erano dicitori d'amore in lingua volgare, anzi erano dicitori d'amore certi poete in lingua latina; tra noi, dico, avvegna forse che tra altra gente addivenisse, e addivegna ancora, sì come in Grecia, non volgari ma litterati poete queste cose trattavano.

E non è molto numero d'anni passati, che appariro prima questi poete volgari; ché dire per rima in volgare tanto è quanto dire per versi in latino, secondo alcuna proporzione. E segno che sia picciolo tempo, è che se volemo cercare in lingua d'oco e in quella di sì, noi non troviamo cose dette anzi lo presente tempo per cento e cinquanta anni.

E la cagione per che alquanti grossi ebbero fama di sapere dire, è che quasi fuoro li primi che dissero in lingua di sì.

E lo primo che cominciò a dire sì come poeta volgare, si mosse però che volle fare intendere le sue parole a donna, a la quale era malagevole d'intendere li versi latini. E questo è contra coloro che rimano sopra altra matera che amorosa, con ciò sia cosa che cotale modo di parlare fosse dal principio trovato per dire d'amore.

Onde, con ciò sia cosa che a li poete sia conceduta maggiore licenza di parlare che a li prosaici dittatori, e questi dicitori per rima non siano altro che poete volgari, degno e ragionevole è che a loro sia maggiore licenzia largita di parlare che a li altri parlatori volgari: onde, se alcuna figura o colore rettorico è conceduto a li poete, conceduto è a li rimatori.

Dunque, se noi vedemo che li poete hanno parlato a le cose inanimate, sì come se avessero senso e ragione, e fattele parlare insieme; e non solamente cose vere, ma cose non vere, cioè che detto hanno, di cose le quali non sono, che

parlano, e detto che molti accidenti parlano, sì come se fossero sustanzie e uomini; degno è lo dicitore per rima di fare lo somigliante, ma non sanza ragione alcuna, ma con ragione la quale poi sia possibile d'aprire per prosa.

Che li poete abbiano così parlato come detto è, appare per ; lo quale dice che Iuno, cioè una dea nemica de li Troiani, parloe ad Eolo, segnore de li venti, quivi nel primo de lo Eneida: *Eole, nanque tibi*, e che questo segnore le rispuose, quivi: *Tuus, o regina, quid optes explorare labor; michi iussa capessere fas est*. Per questo medesimo poeta parla la cosa che non è animata a le cose animate, nel , quivi: *Dardanide duri*. Per Lucano parla la cosa animata a la cosa inanimata, quivi: *Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis*. Per parla l'uomo a la scienzia medesima sì come ad altra persona; e non solamente sono parole d'Orazio, ma dicele quasi recitando lo modo del buono , quivi ne la sua Poetria: *Dic michi, Musa, virum*. Per parla Amore, sì come se fosse persona umana, ne lo principio de lo libro c'ha nome Libro di Remedio d'Amore, quivi: *Bella michi, video, bella parantur, ait*. E per questo puote essere manifesto a chi dubita in alcuna parte di questo mio libello.

E acciò che non ne pigli alcuna baldanza persona grossa, dico che né li poete parlavano così sanza ragione, né quelli che rimano deono parlare così non avendo alcuno ragionamento in loro di quello che dicono; però che grande vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse cose sotto vesta di figura o di colore rettorico, e poscia, domandato, non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotale vesta, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento. E questo mio primo amico e io ne sapemo bene di quelli che così rimano stoltamente.

XXVI

Questa gentilissima donna, di cui ragionato è ne le precedenti parole, venne in tanta grazia de le genti, che quando passava per via, le persone correano per vedere lei; onde mirabile letizia me ne giungea. E quando ella fosse presso d'alcuno, tanta onestade giungea nel cuore di quello, che non ardia di levare li occhi, né di rispondere a lo suo saluto; e di questo molti, sì come esperti, mi potrebbero testimoniare a chi non lo credesse.

Ella coronata e vestita d'umilitade s'andava, nulla gloria mostrando di ciò ch'ella vedea e udia. Diceano molti, poi che passata era: "Questa non è femmina, anzi è uno de li bellissimi angeli del cielo". E altri diceano: "Questa è una maraviglia; che benedetto sia lo Segnore, che sì mirabilemente sae adoperare!".

Io dico ch'ella si mostrava sì gentile e sì piena di tutti li piaceri, che quelli che la miravano comprendeano in loro una dolcezza onesta e soave, tanto che ridicere non lo sapeano; né alcuno era lo quale potesse mirare lei, che nel principio nol convenisse sospirare.

Queste e più mirabili cose da lei procedeano virtuosamente: onde io pensando a ciò, volendo ripigliare lo stilo de la sua loda, propuosi di dicere parole, ne le quali io dessi ad intendere de le sue mirabili ed eccellenti operazioni; acciò che non pur coloro che la poteano sensibilemente vedere, ma li altri sappiano di lei quello che le parole ne possono fare intendere. Allora dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Tanto gentile*.

Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare
la donna mia quand'ella altrui saluta,
ch'ogne lingua deven tremando muta,
e li occhi no l'ardiscon di guardare.

Ella si va, sentendosi laudare,
benignamente d'umiltà vestuta;
e par che sia una cosa venuta
da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare.

Mostrasi sì piacente a chi la mira,
che dà per li occhi una dolcezza al core,

che ‘ntender no la può chi no la prova: 11

e par che de la sua labbia si mova
un spirito soave pien d’amore,
che va dicendo a l’anima: Sospira. 14

Questo sonetto è sì piano ad intendere, per quello che narrato è dinanzi, che non abbisogna d’alcuna divisione; e però lassando lui,dico che questa mia donna venne in tanta grazia, che non solamente ella era onorata e laudata, ma per lei erano onorate e laudate molte.

Ond’io, veggendo ciò e volendo manifestare a chi ciò non vedea, propuosi anche di dire parole, ne le quali ciò fosse significato; e dissi allora questo altro sonetto, che comincia: *Vede perfettamente onne salute*, lo quale narra di lei come la sua vertude adoperava ne l’altre, sì come appare ne la sua divisione.

Vede perfettamente onne salute
chi la mia donna tra le donne vede;
quelle che vanno con lei son tenute
di bella grazia a Dio render merzede. 18

E sua bieltate è di tanta vertute,
che nulla invidia a l’altre ne procede,
anzi le face andar seco vestute
di gentilezza, d’amore e di fede. 22

La vista sua fa onne cosa umile;
e non fa sola sé parer piacente,
ma ciascuna per lei riceve onore. 25

Ed è ne li atti suoi tanto gentile,
che nessun la si può recare a mente,
che non sospiri in dolcezza d’amore. 28

Questo sonetto ha tre parti: ne la prima dico tra che gente questa donna più mirabile parea; ne la seconda dico sì come era graziosa la sua compagnia; ne la terza dico di quelle cose che vertuosamente operava in altrui. La seconda parte comincia quivi: quelle che vanno; la terza quivi: E sua bieltate.

Questa ultima parte si divide in tre: ne la prima dico quello che operava ne le donne, cioè per loro medesime; ne la seconda dico quello che operava in loro per altrui; ne la terza dico come non solamente ne le donne, ma in tutte le persone, e non solamente ne la sua presenzia, ma ricordandosi di lei, mirabilemente operava. La seconda comincia quivi: *La vista sua*; la terza quivi: *Ed è ne li atti*.

XXVII

Appresso ciò, cominciai a pensare uno giorno sopra quello che detto avea de la mia donna, cioè in questi due sonetti precedenti; e veggendo nel mio pensero che io non avea detto di quello che al presente tempo adoperava in me, pareami defettivamente avere parlato.

E però propuosi di dire parole, ne le quali io dicesse come me parea essere disposto a la sua operazione, e come operava in me la sua vertude; e non credendo potere ciò narrare in brevitade di sonetto, cominciai allora una canzone, la quale comincia: Sì lungiamente.

Sì lungiamente m’ha tenuto Amore
e costumato a la sua segnoria,
che sì com’elli m’era forte in pria,
così mi sta soave ora nel core.
Però quando mi tolle sì ‘l valore,

che li spiriti par che fuggan via,
allor sente la frale anima mia
tanta dolcezza, che ‘l viso ne smore,
poi prende Amore in me tanta vertute,
che fa li miei spiriti gir parlando,

ed escon for chiamando
la donna mia, per darmi più salute.
Questo m’avvene ovunque ella mi vede,
e sì è cosa umil, che nol si crede.

XXVIII

Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium. Io era nel proponimento ancora di questa canzone, e compiuta n’avea questa soprascritta stanzia, quando lo segnore de la giustizia chiamoe questa gentilissima a gloriare sotto la insegna di quella regina benedetta virgo Maria, lo cui nome fue in grandissima reverenzia ne le parole di questa Beatrice beata.

E avvegna che forse piacerebbe a presente trattare alquanto de la sua partita da noi, non è lo mio intendimento di trattarne qui per tre ragioni: la prima è che ciò non è del presente proposito, se volemo guardare nel proemio che precede questo libello; la seconda si è che, posto che fosse del presente proposito, ancora non sarebbe sufficiente la mia lingua a trattare come si converrebbe di ciò; la terza si è che, posto che fosse l’uno e l’altro, non è convenevole a me trattare di ciò, per quello che, trattando, converrebbe essere me laudatore di me medesimo, la quale cosa è al postutto biasimevole a chi lo fae; e però lascio cotale trattato ad altro chiosatore.

Tuttavia, però che molte volte lo numero del nove ha preso luogo tra le parole dinanzi, onde pare che sia non sanza ragione, e ne la sua partita cotale numero pare che avesse molto luogo, convenesi di dire quindi alcuna cosa, acciò che pare al proposito convenirsi. Onde prima dicerò come ebbe luogo ne la sua partita, e poi n’assegnerò alcuna ragione, per che questo numero fue a lei cotanto amico.

XXIX

Io dico che, secondo l'usanza d'Arabia, l'anima sua nobilissima si partio ne la prima ora del nono giorno del mese; e secondo l'usanza di Siria, ella si partio nel nono mese de l'anno, però che lo primo mese è ivi Tisirin primo, lo quale a noi è Ottobre; e secondo l'usanza nostra, ella si partio in quello anno de la nostra indizione, cioè de li anni Domini, in cui lo perfetto numero nove volte era compiuto in quello centinaio nel quale in questo mondo ella fue posta, ed ella fue de li cristiani del terzodecimo centinaio.

Perché questo numero fosse in tanto amico di lei, questa potrebbe essere una ragione: con ciò sia cosa che, secondo Tolomeo e secondo la cristiana veritade, nove siano li cieli che si muovono, e, secondo comune oppinione astrologa, li detti cieli adoperino qua giuso secondo la loro abitudine insieme, questo numero fue amico di lei per dare ad intendere che ne la sua generazione tutti e nove li mobili cieli perfettissimamente s'aveano insieme.

Questa è una ragione di ciò; ma più sottilmente pensando, e secondo la infallibile veritade, questo numero fue ella medesima; per similitudine dico, e ciò intendo così. Lo numero del tre è la radice del nove, però che, sanza numero altro alcuno, per se medesimo fa nove, sì come vedemo manifestamente che tre via tre fa nove. Dunque se lo tre è fattore per se medesimo del nove, e lo fattore per se medesimo de li miracoli è tre, cioè Padre e Figlio e Spirito Santo, li quali sono tre e uno, questa donna fue accompagnata da questo numero del nove a dare ad intendere ch'ella era uno nove, cioè uno miracolo, la cui radice, cioè del miracolo, è solamente la mirabile Trinitade.

Forse ancora per più sottile persona si vederebbe in ciò più sottile ragione; ma questa è quella ch'io ne veggio, e che più mi piace.

XXX

Poi che fue partita da questo secolo, rimase tutta la sopradetta cittade quasi vedova dispogliata da ogni dignitade; onde io, ancora lagrimando in questa desolata cittade, scrissi a li principi de la terra alquanto de la sua condizione, pigliando quello cominciamento di Geremia profeta che dice: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas*. E questo dico, acciò che altri non si maravigli perché io l'abbia allegato di sopra, quasi come entrata de la nuova materia che appresso vene.

E se alcuno volesse me riprendere di ciò, ch'io non scrivo qui le parole che seguitano a quelle allegate, escusomene, però che lo intendimento mio non fue dal principio di scrivere altro che per volgare; onde, con ciò sia cosa che le parole che seguitano a quelle che sono allegate, siano tutte latine, sarebbe fuori del mio intendimento se le scrivessi.

E simile intenzione so ch'ebbe questo mio primo amico a cui io ciò scrivo, cioè ch'io li scrivessi solamente volgare.

XXXI

Poi che li miei occhi ebbero per alquanto tempo lagrimato, e tanto affaticati erano che non poteano disfogare la mia tristizia, pensai di volere disfogarla con alquante parole dolorose; e però propuosi di fare una canzone, ne la quale piangendo ragionassi di lei per cui tanto dolore era fatto distruggitore de l'anima mia; e cominciai allora una canzone, la qual comincia: *Li occhi dolenti per pietà del core*.

E acciò che questa canzone paia rimanere più vedova dopo lo suo fine, la dividerò prima che io la scriva; e cotale modo terrò da qui innanzi.

Io dico che questa cattivella canzone ha tre parti: la prima è proemio; ne la seconda ragiono di lei; ne la terza parlo a la canzone pietosamente. La seconda parte comincia quivi: Ita n'è Beatrice; la terza quivi: Pietosa mia canzone.

La prima parte si divide in tre: ne la prima dico perché io mi muovo a dire; ne la seconda dico a cui io voglio dire; ne la terza dico di cui io voglio dire. La seconda comincia quivi: *E perché me ricorda*; la terza quivi: *e dicerò*.

Poscia quando dico: *Ita n'è Beatrice*, ragiono di lei; e intorno a ciò foe due parti: prima dico la cagione per che tolta ne fue; appresso dico come altri si piange de la sua partita, e comincia questa parte quivi: *Partissi de la sua*.

Questa parte si divide in tre: ne la prima dico chi non la piange; ne la seconda dico chi la piange; ne la terza dico de la mia condizione. La seconda comincia quivi: *ma ven tristizia e voglia*; la terza quivi: *Dannomi angoscia*.

Poscia quando dico: *Pietosa mia canzone*, parlo a questa canzone, disignandole a quali donne se ne vada, e steasi con loro.

Li occhi dolenti per pietà del core
hanno di lagrimar sofferta pena,
sì che per vinti son remasi omai.
Ora, s'i' voglio sfogar lo dolore,
che a poco a poco a la morte mi mena,

convenemi parlar traendo guai.
E perché me ricorda ch'io parlai
de la mia donna, mentre che vivia,
donne gentili, volentier con vui,
non voi parlare altrui,

se non a cor gentil che in donna sia;
e dicerò di lei piangendo, pui
che si n’è gita in ciel subitamente,
e ha lasciato Amor meco dolente.
Ita n’è Beatrice in l’alto cielo,

nel reame ove li angeli hanno pace,
e sta con loro, e voi, donne, ha lassate:
no la ci tolse qualità di gelo
né di calore, come l’altre face,
ma solo fue sua gran benignitate;

ché luce de la sua umilitate
passò li cieli con tanta vertute,
che fé maravigliar l’etterno sire,
sì che dolce disire
lo giunse di chiamar tanta salute;

e fella di qua giù a sé venire,
perché vedea ch’esta vita noiosa
non era degna di sì gentil cosa.
Partissi de la sua bella persona
piena di grazia l’anima gentile,

ed èssi gloriosa in loco degno.
Chi no la piange, quando ne ragiona,
core ha di pietra sì malvagio e vile,
ch’entrar no i puote spirito benegno.
Non è di cor villan sì alto ingegno,

che possa imaginar di lei alquanto,
e però no li ven di pianger doglia:
ma ven tristizia e voglia
di sospirare e di morir di pianto,
e d’onne consolar l’anima spoglia

chi vede nel pensero alcuna volta
quale ella fue, e com’ella n’è tolta.
Dannomi angoscia li sospiri forte,

quando ‘l pensero ne la mente grave
mi reca quella che m’ha ‘l cor diviso:

e spesse fiate pensando a la morte,
venemene un disio tanto soave,
che mi tramuta lo color nel viso.
E quando ‘l maginar mi ven ben fiso,
giugnemi tanta pena d’ogne parte,

ch’io mi riscuoto per dolor ch’i’ sento;
e sì fatto divento,
che da le genti vergogna mi parte.
Poscia piangendo, sol nel mio lamento
chiamo Beatrice, e dico: “Or se’ tu morta?”;

e mentre ch’io la chiamo, me conforta.
Pianger di doglia e sospirar d’angoscia
mi strugge ‘l core ovunque sol mi trovo,
sì che ne ‘ncrescerebbe a chi m’audesse:
e quale è stata la mia vita, poscia

che la mia donna andò nel secol novo,
lingua non è che dicer lo sapesse:
e però, donne mie, pur ch’io volesse,
non vi saprei io dir ben quel ch’io sono,
sì mi fa travagliar l’acerba vita;

la quale è sì ‘nvilita,
che ogn’om par che mi dica: “Io t’abbandono”,
veggendo la mia labbia tramortita.
Ma qual ch’io sia la mia donna il si vede,
e io ne spero ancor da lei merzede.

Pietosa mia canzone, or va piangendo;
e ritruova le donne e le donzelle
a cui le tue sorelle
erano usate di portar letizia;
e tu, che se’ figliuola di tristizia,

vatten disconsolata a star con elle.

XXXII

Poi che detta fue questa canzone, sì venne a me uno, lo quale, secondo li gradi de l'amistade, è amico a me immediatamente dopo lo primo; e questi fue tanto distretto di sanguinitade con questa gloriosa, che nullo più presso l'era.

E poi che fue meco a ragionare, mi pregoe ch'io li dovessi dire alcuna cosa per una donna che s'era morta; e simulava sue parole, acciò che paresse che dicesse d'un'altra, la quale morta era certamente: onde io, accorgendomi che questi dicea solamente per questa benedetta, sì li dissi di fare ciò che mi domandava lo suo prego.

Onde poi, pensando a ciò, propuosi di fare uno sonetto, nel quale mi lamentasse alquanto, e di darlo a questo mio amico, acciò che paresse che per lui l'avessi fatto; e dissi allora questo sonetto, che comincia: *Venite a intender li sospiri miei*.

Lo quale ha due parti: ne la prima chiamo li fedeli d'Amore che mi intendano; ne la seconda narro de la mia misera condizione. La seconda comincia quivi: *li quai disconsolati*.

Venite a intender li sospiri miei,
oi cor gentili, ché pietà 'l disia:
li quai disconsolati vanno via,
e s'e' non fosser, di dolor morrei;

però che gli occhi mi sarebber rei,
molte fiate più ch'io non vorria,
lasso!, di pianger sì la donna mia,
che sfogasser lo cor, piangendo lei.

Voi udirete lor chiamar sovente
la mia donna gentil, che si n'è gita
al secol degno de la sua vertute;

e dispregiar talora questa vita
in persona de l'anima dolente
abbandonata de la sua salute.

XXXIII

Poi che detto ei questo sonetto, pensandomi chi questi era a cui lo intendea dare quasi come per lui fatto, vidi che povero mi parea lo servigio e nudo a così distretta persona di questa gloriosa.

E però, anzi ch'io li dessi questo soprascritto sonetto, sì dissi due stanzie d'una canzone, l'una per costui veracemente, e l'altra per me, avvegna che paia l'una e l'altra per una persona detta, a chi non guarda sottilmente; ma chi sottilmente le mira vede bene che diverse persone parlano, acciò che l'una non chiama sua donna costei, e l'altra sì, come appare manifestamente.

Questa canzone e questo soprascritto sonetto li diedi, dicendo io lui che per lui solo fatto l'avea.

La canzone comincia: *Quantunque volte*, e ha due parti: ne l'una, cioè ne la prima stanzia, si lamenta questo mio caro e distretto a lei; ne la seconda mi lamento io, cioè ne l'altra stanzia, che comincia: *E' si raccoglie ne li miei*. E così appare che in questa canzone si lamentano due persone, l'una de le quali si lamenta come frate, l'altra come servo.

Quantunque volte, lasso!, mi rimembra
ch'io non debbo già mai
veder la donna ond'io vo sì dolente,
tanto dolore intorno 'l cor m'assembra
la dolorosa mente,

ch'io dico: "Anima mia, ché non ten vai?
ché li tormenti che tu porterai
nel secol, che t'è già tanto noioso,
mi fan pensoso di paura forte".
Ond'io chiamo la Morte,

come soave e dolce mio riposo;
e dico "Vieni a me" con tanto amore,
che sono astioso di chiunque more.
E' si raccoglie ne li miei sospiri
un sono di pietate,

che va chiamando Morte tuttavia:
a lei si volser tutti i miei disiri,
quando la donna mia
fu giunta da la sua crudelitate;
perché ‘l piacere de la sua bieltate,

partendo sé da la nostra veduta,
divenne spirital bellezza grande,
che per lo cielo spande
luce d’amor, che li angeli saluta
e lo intelletto loro alto, sottile

face maravigliar, sì v’è gentile.

XXXIV

In quello giorno nel quale si compiea l'anno che questa donna era fatta de li cittadini di vita eterna, io mi sedea in parte ne la quale, ricordandomi di lei, disegnava uno angelo sopra certe tavolette; e mentre io lo disegnava, volsi li occhi, e vidi lungo me uomini a li quali si convenia di fare onore.

E' riguardavano quello che io facea; e secondo che me fu detto poi, elli erano stati già alquanto anzi che io me ne accorgesse. Quando li vidi, mi levai, e salutando loro dissi: "Altri era testé meco, però pensava".

Onde partiti costoro, ritornaimi a la mia opera, cioè del disegnare figure d'angeli: e faccendo ciò, mi venne uno pensero di dire parole, quasi per annovale, e scrivere a costoro li quali erano venuti a me; e dissi allora questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Era venuta*; lo quale ha due cominciamenti, e però lo dividerò secondo l'uno e secondo l'altro.

Dico che secondo lo primo questo sonetto ha tre parti: ne la prima dico che questa donna era già ne la mia memoria; ne la seconda dico quello che Amore però mi facea; ne la terza dico de gli effetti d'Amore. La seconda comincia quivi: *Amor, che*; la terza quivi: *Piangendo uscivan for*.

Questa parte si divide in due: ne l'una dico che tutti li miei sospiri uscivano parlando; ne la seconda dico che alquanti diceano certe parole diverse da gli altri.

La seconda comincia quivi: *Ma quei*. Per questo medesimo modo si divide secondo l'altro cominciamento, salvo che ne la prima parte dico quando questa donna era così venuta ne la mia memoria, e ciò non dico ne l'altro.

Primo cominciamento

Era venuta ne la mente mia
la gentil donna che per suo valore
fu posta da l'altissimo signore
nel ciel de l'umiltate, ov'è Maria.

Secondo cominciamento

Era venuta ne la mente mia
quella donna gentil cui piange Amore,
entro ‘n quel punto che lo suo valore
vi trasse a riguardar quel ch’eo facia.

Amor, che ne la mente la sentia,
s’era svegliato nel destrutto core,
e diceva a’ sospiri: “Andate fore”;
per che ciascun dolente si partia.

Piangendo uscivan for de lo mio petto
con una voce che sovente mena
le lagrime dogliose a li occhi tristi.

Ma quei che n’uscian for con maggior pena,
venian dicendo: “Oi nobile intelletto,
oggi fa l’anno che nel ciel salisti”.

XXXV

Poi per alquanto tempo, con ciò fosse cosa che io fosse in parte ne la quale mi ricordava del passato tempo, molto stava pensoso, e con dolorosi pensamenti, tanto che mi faceano parere de fore una vista di terribile sbigottimento.

Onde io, accorgendomi del mio travagliare, levai li occhi per vedere se altri mi vedesse. Allora vidi una gentile donna giovane e bella molto, la quale da una finestra mi riguardava sì pietosamente, quanto a la vista, che tutta la pietà parea in lei accolta.

Onde, con ciò sia cosa che quando li miseri veggiono di loro compassione altrui, più tosto si muovono a lagrimare, quasi come di se stessi avendo pietade, io senti' allora cominciare li miei occhi a volere piangere; e però, temendo di non mostrare la mia vile vita, mi partio dinanzi da li occhi di questa gentile; e dicea poi fra me medesimo: "E' non puote essere che con quella pietosa donna non sia nobilissimo amore".

E però propuosi di dire uno sonetto, ne lo quale io parlasse a lei, e conchiudesse in esso tutto ciò che narrato è in questa ragione. E però che per questa ragione è assai manifesto, sì nollo dividerò. Lo sonetto comincia: *Videro li occhi miei*.

Videro li occhi miei quanta pietate
era apparita in la vostra figura,
quando guardaste li atti e la statura
ch'io faccio per dolor molte fiate.

Allor m'accorsi che voi pensavate
la qualità de la mia vita oscura,
sì che mi giunse ne lo cor paura
di dimostrar con li occhi mia viltate.

E tolsimi dinanzi a voi, sentendo
che si movean le lagrime dal core,
ch'era sommosso da la vostra vista.

Io dicea poscia ne l’anima trista:
“Ben è con quella donna quello Amore
lo qual mi face andar così piangendo”. 14

XXXVI

Avvenne poi che là ovunque questa donna mi vedea, sì si facea d’una vista pietosa e d’un colore palido quasi come d’amore; onde molte fiate mi ricordava de la mia nobilissima donna, che di simile colore si mostrava tuttavia.

E certo molte volte non potendo lagrimare né disfogare la mia tristizia, io andava per vedere questa pietosa donna, la quale parea che tirasse le lagrime fuori de li miei occhi per la sua vista.

E però mi venne volontade di dire anche parole, parlando a lei, e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Color d’amore*; ed è piano sanza dividerlo, per la sua precedente ragione.

Color d’amore e di pietà sembianti
non preser mai così mirabilmente
viso di donna, per veder sovente
occhi gentili o dolorosi pianti,

come lo vostro, qualora davanti
vedetevi la mia labbia dolente;
sì che per voi mi ven cosa a la mente,
ch’io temo forte non lo cor si schianti.

Eo non posso tener li occhi distrutti
che non reguardin voi spesse fiate,
per desiderio di pianger ch’elli hanno:

e voi crescete sì lor volontate,
che de la voglia si consuman tutti;
ma lagrimar dinanzi a voi non sanno.

XXXVII

Io venni a tanto per la vista di questa donna, che li miei occhi si cominciaro a dilettare troppo di vederla; onde molte volte me ne crucciava nel mio cuore ed aveamene per vile assai.

Onde più volte bestemmiava la vanitade de li occhi miei, e dicea loro nel mio pensero: “Or voi solavate fare piangere chi vedea la vostra dolorosa condizione, e ora pare che vogliate dimenticarlo per questa donna che vi mira; che non mira voi, se non in quanto le pesa de la gloriosa donna di cui piangere solete; ma quanto potete fate, ché io la vi pur rimembrerò molto spesso, maladetti occhi, ché mai, se non dopo la morte, non dovrebbero le vostre lagrime avere restate”.

E quando così avea detto fra me medesimo a li miei occhi, e li sospiri m’assalivano grandissimi e angosciosi. E acciò che questa battaglia che io avea meco non rimanesse saputa pur dal misero che la sentia, propuosi di fare un sonetto, e di comprendere in ello questa orribile condizione. E dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *L’amaro lagrimar*.

Ed hae due parti: ne la prima parlo a li occhi miei sì come parlava lo mio cuore in me medesimo; ne la seconda rimuovo alcuna dubitazione, manifestando chi è che così parla; e comincia questa parte quivi: *Così dice*.

Potrebbe bene ancora ricevere più divisioni, ma sariano indarno, però che è manifesto per la precedente ragione.

“L’amaro lagrimar che voi faceste,
oi occhi miei, così lunga stagione,
facea lagrimar l’altre persone
de la pietate, come voi vedeste.

Ora mi par che voi l’oblïereste,
s’io fosse dal mio lato sì fellone,
ch’i’ non ven disturbasse ogne cagione,
membrandovi colei cui voi piangeste.

La vostra vanità mi fa pensare,
e spaventami sì, ch’io temo forte
del viso d’una donna che vi mira.

Voi non dovreste mai, se non per morte,
la vostra donna, ch’è morta, obliare”.
Così dice ‘l meo core, e poi sospira. 14

XXXVIII

Ricovrai la vista di quella donna in sì nuova condizione, che molte volte ne pensava sì come di persona che troppo mi piacesse; e pensava di lei così: “Questa è una donna gentile, bella, giovane e savia, e apparita forse per volontade d’Amore, acciò che la mia vita si riposi”. E molte volte pensava più amorosamente, tanto che lo cuore consentiva in lui, cioè nel suo ragionare.

E quando io avea consentito ciò, e io mi ripensava sì come da la ragione mosso, e dicea fra me medesimo: “Deo, che pensero è questo, che in così vile modo vuole consolare me e non mi lascia quasi altro pensare?”.

Poi si rilevava un altro pensero, e diceame: “Or tu se’ stato in tanta tribulazione, perché non vuoli tu ritrarre te da tanta amaritudine? Tu vedi che questo è uno spiramento d’Amore, che ne reca li disiri d’amore dinanzi, ed è mosso da così gentil parte com’è quella de li occhi de la donna che tanto pietosa ci s’hae mostrata”.

Onde io, avendo così più volte combattuto in me medesimo, ancora ne volli dire alquante parole; e però che la battaglia de’ pensieri vinceano coloro che per lei parlavano, mi parve che si convenisse di parlare a lei; e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Gentil pensero*; e dico ‘gentile’ in quanto ragionava di gentile donna, ché per altro era vilissimo.

In questo sonetto fo due parti di me, secondo che li miei pensieri erano divisi. L’una parte chiamo cuore, cioè l’appetito; l’altra chiamo anima, cioè la ragione; e dico come l’uno dice con l’altro. E che degno sia di chiamare l’appetito cuore, e la ragione anima, assai è manifesto a coloro a cui mi piace che ciò sia aperto.

Vero è che nel precedente sonetto io fo la parte del cuore contra quella de li occhi, e ciò pare contrario di quello che io dico nel presente; e però dico che ivi lo cuore anche intendo per lo appetito, però che maggiore desiderio era lo mio ancora di ricordarmi de la gentilissima donna mia, che di vedere costei, avegna che alcuno appetito n’avessi già, ma leggiero parea: onde appare che l’uno detto non è contrario a l’altro.

Questo sonetto ha tre parti: ne la prima comincio a dire a questa donna come lo mio desiderio si volge tutto verso lei; ne la seconda dico come l’anima, cioè la ragione, dice al cuore, cioè a lo appetito; ne la terza dico com’e’ le risponde. La seconda parte comincia quivi: *L’anima dice*; la terza quivi: *Ei le risponde*.

Gentil pensero che parla di vui
sen vene a dimorar meco sovente,

e ragiona d’amor sì dolcemente,
che face consentir lo core in lui.

L’anima dice al cor: “Chi è costui,
che vene a consolar la nostra mente,
ed è la sua vertù tanto possente,
ch’altro penser non lascia star con nui?”.

Ei le risponde: “Oi anima pensosa,
questi è uno spiritel novo d’amore,
che reca innanzi me li suoi desiri;

e la sua vita, e tutto ‘l suo valore,
mosse de li occhi di quella pietosa
che si turbava de’ nostri martiri”.

XXXIX

Contra questo avversario de la ragione si levoe un die, quasi ne l’ora de la nona, una forte imaginazione in me, che mi parve vedere questa gloriosa Beatrice con quelle vestimenta sanguigne co le quali apparve prima a li occhi miei; e pareami giovane in simile etade in quale io prima la vidi.

Allora cominciai a pensare di lei; e ricordandomi di lei secondo l’ordine del tempo passato, lo mio cuore cominciò dolorosamente a pentere de lo desiderio a cui sì vilmente s’avea lasciato possedere alquanti die contra la costanzia de la ragione: e discacciato questo cotale malvagio desiderio, sì si rivolsero tutti li miei pensamenti a la loro gentilissima Beatrice.

E dico che d’allora innanzi cominciai a pensare di lei sì con tutto lo vergognoso cuore, che li sospiri manifestavano ciò molte volte; però che tutti quasi diceano nel loro uscire quello che nel cuore si ragionava, cioè lo nome di quella gentilissima, e come si partio da noi. E molte volte avvenia che tanto dolore avea in sé alcuno pensero, ch’io dimenticava lui e là dov’io era.

Per questo raccendimento de’ sospiri si raccese lo sollenato lagrimare in guisa che li miei occhi pareano due cose che disiderassero pur di piangere; e spesso avvenia che per lo lungo continuare del pianto, dintorno loro si facea uno colore purpureo, lo quale suole apparire per alcuno martirio che altri riceva.

Onde appare che de la loro vanitade fuoro degnamente guiderdonati; sì che d’allora innanzi non potero mirare persona che li guardasse sì che loro potesse trarre a simile intendimento.

Onde io, volendo che cotale desiderio malvagio e vana tentazione paresse distrutto, sì che alcuno dubbio non potessero inducere le rimate parole ch’io avea dette innanzi, propuosi di fare uno sonetto ne lo quale io comprendesse la sentenzia di questa ragione. E dissi allora: *Lasso! per forza di molti sospiri*; e dissi ‘lasso’ in quanto mi vergognava di ciò, che li miei occhi aveano così vaneggiato.

Questo sonetto non divido, però che assai lo manifesta la sua ragione.

Lasso! per forza di molti sospiri,
che nascon de’ penser che son nel core,
li occhi son vinti, e non hanno valore
di riguardar persona che li miri. 4

E fatti son che paion due disiri
di lagrimare e di mostrar dolore,
e spesse volte piangon sì, ch’Amore
li ‘ncerchia di corona di martìri.

Questi penseri, e li sospir ch’eo gitto,
diventan ne lo cor sì angosciosi,
ch’Amor vi tramortisce, sì lien dole;

però ch’elli hanno in lor li dolorosi
quel dolce nome di madonna scritto,
e de la morte sua molte parole.

XL

Dopo questa tribulazione avvenne, in quello tempo che molta gente va per vedere quella imagine benedetta la quale Iesu Cristo lasciò a noi per essemplo de la sua bellissima figura, la quale vede la mia donna gloriosamente, che alquanti peregrini passavano per una via la quale è quasi mezzo de la cittade ove nacque e vivette e morio la gentilissima donna.

Li quali peregrini andavano, secondo che mi parve, molto pensosi; ond'io, pensando a loro, dissi fra me medesimo: "Questi peregrini mi paiono di lontana parte, e non credo che anche udissero parlare di questa donna, e non ne sanno neente; anzi li loro penseri sono d'altre cose che di queste qui, ché forse pensano de li loro amici lontani, li quali noi non conoscemo".

Poi dicea fra me medesimo: "Io so che s'elli fossero di propinquo paese, in alcuna vista parrebbero turbati passando per lo mezzo de la dolorosa cittade".

Poi dicea fra me medesimo: "Se io li potesse tenere alquanto, io li pur farei piangere anzi ch'elli uscissero di questa cittade, però che io direi parole le quali farebbero piangere chiunque le intendesse".

Onde, passati costoro da la mia veduta, propuosi di fare uno sonetto, ne lo quale io manifestasse ciò che io avea detto fra me medesimo; e acciò che più paresse pietoso, propuosi di dire come se io avesse parlato a loro; e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Deh peregrini che pensosi andate*.

E dissi 'peregrini' secondo la larga significazione del vocabulo; ché peregrini si possono intendere in due modi, in uno largo e in uno stretto: in largo, in quanto è peregrino chiunque è fuori de la sua patria; in modo stretto non s'intende peregrino se non chi va verso la casa di sa' Iacopo o riede.

E però è da sapere che in tre modi si chiamano propriamente le genti che vanno al servigio de l'Altissimo: chiamansi palmieri in quanto vanno oltremare, là onde molte volte recano la palma; chiamansi peregrini in quanto vanno a la casa di Galizia, però che la sepultura di sa' Iacopo fue più lontana de la sua patria che d'alcuno altro apostolo; chiamansi romei in quanto vanno a Roma, là ove questi cu' io chiamo peregrini andavano.

Questo sonetto non divido, però che assai lo manifesta la sua ragione.

Deh peregrini che pensosi andate,
forse di cosa che non v'è presente,
venite voi da sì lontana gente,
com'a la vista voi ne dimostrate, 4

che non piangete quando voi passate
per lo suo mezzo la città dolente,
come quelle persone che neente
par che ‘ntendesser la sua gravitate? 8

Se voi restaste per volerlo audire,
certo lo cor de’ sospiri mi dice
che lagrimando n’uscireste pui. 11

Ell’ha perduta la sua beatrice;
e le parole ch’om di lei pò dire
hanno vertù di far piangere altrui. 14

XLI

Poi mandaro due donne gentili a me pregando che io mandasse loro di queste mie parole rimate; onde io, pensando la loro nobilitade, propuosi di mandare loro e di fare una cosa nuova, la quale io mandasse a loro con esse, acciò che più onorevolemente adempiesse li loro prieghi. E dissi allora uno sonetto, lo quale narra del mio stato, e manda'lo a loro co lo precedente sonetto accompagnato, e con un altro che comincia: Venite a intender.

Lo sonetto lo quale io feci allora, comincia: *Oltre la spera*; lo quale ha in sé cinque parti.

Ne la prima dico ove va lo mio pensero, nominandolo per lo nome d'alcuno suo effetto.

Ne la seconda dico perché va là suso, cioè chi lo fa così andare.

Ne la terza dico quello che vide, cioè una donna onorata là suso; e chiamolo allora 'spirito peregrino', acciò che spiritualmente va là suso, e sì come peregrino lo quale è fuori de la sua patria, vi stae.

Ne la quarta dico come elli la vede tale, cioè in tale qualitade, che io non lo posso intendere, cioè a dire che lo mio pensero sale ne la qualitade di costei in grado che lo mio intelletto no lo puote comprendere; con ciò sia cosa che lo nostro intelletto s'abbia a quelle benedette anime sì come l'occhio debole a lo sole: e ciò dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de la Metafisica.

Ne la quinta dico che, avvegna che io non possa intendere là ove lo pensero mi trae, cioè a la sua mirabile qualitade, almeno intendo questo, cioè che tutto è lo cotale pensare de la mia donna, però ch'io sento lo suo nome spesso nel mio pensero: e nel fine di questa quinta parte dico 'donne mie care', a dare ad intendere che sono donne coloro a cui io parlo.

La seconda parte comincia quivi: intelligenza nova; la terza quivi: *Quand'elli è giunto*; la quarta quivi: *Vedela tal*; la quinta quivi: *So io che parla*.

Potrebbesi più sottilmente ancora dividere, e più sottilmente fare intendere; ma puotesi passare con questa divisa, e però non m'intrametto di più dividerlo.

Oltre la spera che più larga gira
passa 'l sospiro ch'esce del mio core:
intelligenza nova, che l'Amore
piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira. 4

Quand’elli è giunto là dove disira,
vede una donna, che riceve onore,
e luce sì, che per lo suo splendore
lo peregrino spirito la mira. 8

Vedela tal, che quando ‘l mi ridice,
io no lo intendo, sì parla sottile
al cor dolente, che lo fa parlare. 11

So io che parla di quella gentile,
però che spesso ricorda Beatrice,
sì ch’io lo ‘ntendo ben, donne mie care. 14

XLII

(XLIII) Appresso questo sonetto apparve a me una mirabile visione, ne la quale io vidi cose che mi fecero proporre di non dire più di questa benedetta infino a tanto che io potesse più degnamente trattare di lei.

E di venire a ciò io studio quanto posso, sì com'ella sae veracemente. Sì che, se piacere sarà di colui a cui tutte le cose vivono, che la mia vita duri per alquanti anni, io spero di dicer di lei quello che mai non fue detto d'alcuna.

E poi piaccia a colui che è sire de la cortesia, che la mia anima se ne possa gire a vedere la gloria de la sua donna, cioè di quella benedetta Beatrice, la quale gloriosamente mira ne la faccia di colui *qui est per omnia secula benedictus*.

IL CONVIVIO

Il Convivio è un'opera composta nei primi anni dell'esilio, ovvero tra il 1304 e il 1307. Il progetto iniziale di Dante era di scrivere un'opera in volgare (destinata quindi anche a coloro che non conoscessero il latino) ripartita in quindici trattati, il primo dei quali con funzione introduttiva e i restanti quattordici di commento ad altrettante canzoni. Dante si ferma però al quarto trattato, commentando le sole tre canzoni Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete, Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona e Le dolci rime d'amor ch'i' solìa. Ciò perché si pensa avesse già in mente lo schema di un'opera superiore, *la Commedia*.

Il termine "convivio" deriva dal latino convivium e può essere tradotto come banchetto, simposio. L'opera è quindi una mensa (convivio), che offre ai partecipanti (ovvero a coloro che hanno desiderio di sapere e conoscere) una difficile pietanza (vivanda), accompagnata da pane che ne faciliterà l'assimilazione. Alla vivanda corrisponderanno le canzoni, mentre al pane i vari commenti esplicativi.

La prosa del Convivio è caratterizzata da uno stile argomentativo lucido e razionale, che passa in rassegna grandi temi filosofici del tempo (cosmologia, metafisica, politica, etc.), intrisi di aristotelismo, allo scopo di formare un'opera enciclopedica che contenga in teoria tutto lo scibile umano.

Il Convivio è un prosimetro (dal lat. prosimetrum) è un tipo di componimento misto, in prosa e versi, che si struttura in forma di romanzo.

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TRATTATO PRIMO

CAPITOLO I

1. Sì come dice lo Filosofo nel principio de la Prima Filosofia, tutti li uomini naturalmente desiderano di sapere. La ragione di che puote essere ed è che ciascuna cosa, da providenza di propria natura impinta è inclinabile a la sua propria perfezione; onde, acciò che la scienza è ultima perfezione de la nostra anima, ne la quale sta la nostra ultima felicitade, tutti naturalmente al suo desiderio semo subietti.

2. Veramente da questa nobilissima perfezione molti sono privati per diverse cagioni, che dentro a l'uomo e di fuori da esso lui rimovono da l'abito di scienza.

3. Dentro da l'uomo possono essere due difetti e impedi[men]ti: l'uno da la parte del corpo, l'altro da la parte de l'anima. Da la parte del corpo è quando le parti sono indebitamente disposte, sì che nulla ricevere può, sì come sono sordi e muti e loro simili. Da la parte de l'anima è quando la malizia vince in essa, sì che si fa seguitatrice di viziose delettazioni, ne le quali riceve tanto inganno che per quelle ogni cosa tiene a vile.

4. Di fuori da l'uomo possono essere similemente due cagioni intese, l'una de le quali è induttrice di necessitade, l'altra di pigrizia. La prima è la cura familiare e civile, la quale convenevolmente a sè tiene de li uomini lo maggior numero, sì che in ozio di speculazione esser non possono. L'altra è lo difetto del luogo dove la persona è nata e nutrita, che tal ora sarà da ogni Studio non solamente privato, ma da gente studiosa lontano.

5. Le due di queste cagioni, cioè la prima da la parte [di dentro e la prima da la parte] di fuori, non sono da vituperare, ma da escusare e di perdono degne; le due altre, avvegna che l'una più, sono degne di biasimo e d'abominazione.

6. Manifestamente adunque può vedere chi bene considera, che pochi rimangono quelli che a l'abito da tutti desiderato possano pervenire, e innumerabili quasi sono li 'mpediti che di questo cibo sempre vivono affamati.

7. Oh beati quelli pochi che seggiono a quella mensa dove lo pane de li angeli si manuca! e miseri quelli che con le pecore hanno comune cibo!

8. Ma però che ciascuno uomo a ciascuno uomo naturalmente è amico, e ciascuno amico si duole del difetto di colui ch'elli ama, coloro che a così alta mensa sono cibati non sanza misericordia sono inver di quelli che in bestiale pastura veggiono erba e ghiande sen gire mangiando.

9. E acciò che misericordia è madre di beneficio, sempre liberalmente coloro che sanno porgono de la loro buona ricchezza a li veri poveri, e sono quasi fonte vivo, de la cui acqua si refrigera la naturale sete che di sopra è nominata.

10. E io adunque, che non seggio a la beata mensa, ma, fuggito de la pastura del vulgo, a' piedi di coloro che seggiono ricolgo di quello che da loro cade, e conosco la misera vita di quelli che dietro m'ho lasciati, per la dolcezza ch'io sento in quello che a poco a poco ricolgo, misericordievolmente mosso, non me dimenticando, per li miseri alcuna cosa ho riservata, la quale a li occhi loro, già è più tempo, ho dimostrata; e in ciò li ho fatti maggiormente vogliosi.

11. Per che ora volendo loro apparecchiare, intendo fare un generale convivio di ciò ch'i' ho loro mostrato, e di quello pane ch'è mestiere a così fatta vivanda, sanza lo quale da loro non potrebbe esser mangiata.

12. E questo [è quello] convivio, di quello pane degno, con tale vivanda qual io intendo indarno [non] essere ministrata. E però ad esso non s'assetti alcuno male de' suoi organi disposto, però che nè denti nè lingua ha nè palato; nè alcuno settatore di vizii, perchè lo stomaco suo è pieno d'omori venenosi contrarii, sì che mai vivanda non terrebbe.

13. Ma vegna qua qualunque è [per cura] familiare o civile ne la umana fame rimaso, e ad una mensa con li altri simili impediti s'assetti; e a li loro piedi si pongano tutti quelli che per pigrizia si sono stati, che non sono degni di più alto sedere: e quelli e questi prendano la mia vivanda col pane, che la far[à] loro e gustare e patire.

14. La vivanda di questo convivio sarà di quattordici maniere ordinata, cioè quattordici canzoni sì d'amor come di vertù materiate, le quali sanza lo presente pane aveano d'alcuna oscuritade ombra, sì che a molti loro bellezza più che loro bontade era in grado.

15. Ma questo pane, cioè la presente disposizione, sarà la luce la quale ogni colore di loro sentenza farà parvente.

16. E se ne la presente opera, la quale è Convivio nominata e vo' che sia, più virilmente si trattasse che ne la Vita Nuova, non intendo però a quella in parte alcuna derogare, ma maggiormente giovare per questa quella; veggendo sì come ragionevolmente quella fervida e passionata, questa temperata e virile esser conviene.

17. Chè altro si conviene e dire e operare ad una etade che ad altra; perchè certi costumi sono idonei e laudabili ad una etade che sono sconci e biasimevoli ad altra, sì come di sotto, nel quarto trattato di questo libro, sarà propria ragione mostrata. E io in quella dinanzi, a l'entrata de la mia gioventute parlai, e in questa dipoi, quella già trapassata.

18. E con ciò sia cosa che la vera intenzione mia fosse altra che quella che di fuori mostrano le canzoni predette, per allegorica esposizione quelle intendo mostrare, appresso la litterale istoria ragionata; sì che l'una ragione e l'altra darà sapore a coloro che a questa cena sono convitati.

19. Li quali priego tutti che se lo convivio non fosse tanto splendido quanto conviene a la sua grida, che non al mio volere ma a la mia facultade imputino ogni difetto; però che la mia voglia di compita e cara liberalitate è qui seguace.

CAPITOLO II

1. Nel cominciamento di ciascuno bene ordinato convivio sogliono li sergenti prendere lo pane apposito, e quello purgare da ogni macula. Per che io, che ne la presente scrittura tengo luogo di quelli, da due macule mondare intendo primieramente questa esposizione, che per pane si conta nel mio corredo.

2. L'una, è che parlare alcuno di se medesimo pare non licito; l'altra è, che parlare in esponendo troppo a fondo pare non ragionevole: e lo illicito e 'l non ragionevole lo coltello del mio giudicio purga in questa forma.

3. Non si concede per li retorici alcuno di se medesimo sanza necessaria cagione parlare, e da ciò è l'uomo rimosso, perchè parlare d'alcuno non si può che il parladore non lodi o non biasimi quelli di cui elli parla; le quali due cagioni rusticamente stanno, a far [dire] di sè, ne la bocca di ciascuno.

4. E per levare un dubbio che qui surge, dico che peggio sta biasimare che lodare, avvegna che l'uno e l'altro non sia da fare. La ragione è che qualunque cosa è per sè da biasimare, è più laida che quella che è per accidente.

5. Dispregiar se medesimo è per sè biasimevole, però che a l'amico dee l'uomo lo suo difetto contare strettamente, e nullo è più amico che l'uomo a sè; onde ne la camera de' suoi pensieri se medesimo riprender dee e piangere li suoi difetti, e non palese.

6. Ancora: del non potere e del non sapere ben sè menare le più volte non è l'uomo vituperato, ma del non volere è sempre, perchè nel volere e nel non volere nostro si giudica la malizia e la bontade; e però chi biasima se medesimo appruova sè conoscere lo suo difetto, appruova sè non essere buono: per che, per sè, è da lasciare di parlare sè biasimando.

7. Lodare sè è da fuggire sì come male per accidente, in quanto lodare non si può, che quella loda non sia maggiormente vituperio. È loda ne la punta de le parole, è vituperio chi cerca loro nel ventre: chè le parole sono fatte per mostrare quello che non si sa, onde chi loda sè mostra che non creda essere buono tenuto; che non li incontra sanza maliziata conscienza, la quale, sè lodando, discuopre e, discoprendo, si biasima.

8. E ancora la propria loda e lo proprio biasimo è da fuggire per una ragione igualmente, sì come falsa testimonianza fare; però che non è uomo che sia di sè vero e giusto misuratore, tanto la propria caritate ne 'nganna.

9. Onde avviene che ciascuno ha nel suo giudicio le misure del falso mercatante, che compera con l'una e vende con l'altra; e ciascuno con ampia misura cerca lo suo mal fare e con piccola cerca lo bene; sì che 'l numero e la

quantità e ‘l peso del bene li pare più che se con giusta misura fosse saggiato, e quello del male meno.

10. Per che, parlando di sè con loda o col contrario, o dice falso per rispetto a la cosa di che parla; o dice falso per rispetto a la sua sentenza, c’ha l’una e l’altra falsitate.

11. E però, con ciò sia cosa che lo consentire è uno confessare, villania fa chi loda o chi biasima dinanzi al viso alcuno, perchè nè consentire nè negare puote lo così estimato sanza cadere in colpa di lodarsi o di biasimare: salva qui la via de la debita correzione, che essere non può sanza improperio del fallo che correggere s’intende; e salva la via del debito onorare e magnificare, la quale passar non si può sanza far menzione de l’opere virtuose, o de le dignitadi virtuosamente acquistate.

12. Veramente, al principale intendimento tornando, dico, come è toccato di sopra, per necessarie cagioni lo parlare di sè è conceduto: e intra l’altre necessarie cagioni due sono più manifeste.

13. L’una è quando sanza ragionare di sè grande infamia o pericolo non si può cessare; e allora si concede, per la ragione che de li due sentieri prendere lo men reo è quasi prendere un buono. E questa necessitate mosse Boezio di se medesimo a parlare, acciò che sotto pretesto di consolazione escusasse la perpetuale infamia del suo essilio, mostrando quello essere ingiusto, poi che altro escusatore non si levava.

14. L’altra è quando, per ragionare di sè, grandissima utilitade ne segue altrui per via di dottrina; e questa ragione mosse Agustino ne le sue Confessioni a parlare di sè, chè per lo processo de la sua vita, lo quale fu di [non] buono in buono, e di buono in migliore, e di migliore in ottimo, ne diede essemplo e dottrina, la quale per sì vero testimonio ricevere non si potea.

15. Per che se l’una e l’altra di queste ragioni mi scusa, sufficientemente lo pane del mio formento è purgato de la prima sua macula. Movemi timore d’infamia, e movemi desiderio di dottrina dare la quale altri veramente dare non può.

16. Temo la infamia di tanta passione avere seguita, quanta concepe chi legge le sopra nominate canzoni in me avere segnoreggiata; la quale infamia si cessa, per lo presente di me parlare, interamente, lo quale mostra che non passione ma vertù sia stata la movente cagione.

17. Intendo anche mostrare la vera sentenza di quelle, che per alcuno vedere non si può s’io non la conto, perchè è nascosa sotto figura d’allegoria: e questo non solamente darà diletto buono a udire, ma sottile ammaestramento e a così parlare e a così intendere l’altrui scritture.

CAPITOLO III

1. Degna di molta riprensione è quella cosa che, ordinata a torre alcuno difetto, per se medesima quello induce; sì come quelli che fosse mandato a partire una rissa e, prima che partisse quella, ne iniziasse un'altra. 2. E però che lo mio pane è purgato da una parte, convienlomi purgare da l'altra, per fuggire questa riprensione, che lo mio scritto, che quasi comento dir si può, è ordinato a levar lo difetto de le canzoni sopra dette, ed esso per sè fia forse in parte alcuna un poco duro. La qual durezza, per fuggir maggiore difetto, non per ignoranza, è qui pensata. 3. Ahi, piaciuto fosse al dispensatore de l'universo che la cagione de la mia scusa mai non fosse stata! chè nè altri contra me avria fallato, nè io sofferto avria pena ingiustamente, pena, dico, d'essilio e di povertate. 4. Poi che fu piacere de li cittadini de la bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza, di gittarmi fuori del suo dolce seno - nel quale nato e nutrito fui in fino al colmo de la vita mia, e nel quale, con buona pace di quella, desidero con tutto lo cuore di riposare l'animo stancato e terminare lo tempo che m'è dato -, per le parti quasi tutte a le quali questa lingua si stende, peregrino, quasi mendicando, sono andato, mostrando contra mia voglia la piaga de la fortuna, che suole ingiustamente al piagato molte volte essere imputata. 5. Veramente io sono stato legno sanza vela e sanza governo, portato a diversi porti e foci e liti dal vento secco che vapora la dolorosa povertade; e sono apparito a li occhi a molti che forsechè per alcuna fama in altra forma m'aveano imaginato, nel conspetto de' quali non solamente mia persona invilio, ma di minor pregio si fece ogni opera, sì già fatta, come quella che fosse a fare. 6. La ragione per che ciò incontra - non pur in me, ma in tutti - brievemente or qui piace toccare: e prima, perchè la stima oltre la veritade si sciampia; e poi, perchè la presenzia oltre la veritade stringe. 7. La fama buona principalmente è generata da la buona operazione ne la mente de l'amico, e da quella è prima partorita; chè la mente del nemico, avvegna che riceva lo seme, non concepe. 8. Quella mente che prima la partorisce, sì per far più ornato lo suo presente, sì per la caritade de l'amico che lo riceve, non si tiene a li termini del vero, ma passa quelli. E quando per ornare ciò che dice li passa, contra conscienza parla; quando inganno di caritade li fa passare, non parla contra essa. 9. La seconda mente che ciò riceve, non solamente a la dilatazione de la prima sta contenta, ma 'l suo riportamento, sì come qu[as]i suo effetto, procura d'adornare; e sì, che per questo fare e per lo 'nganno che riceve de la caritade in lei generata, quella più ampia fa che a lei non viene, e con concordia e con discordia di conscienza come la prima. E questo fa la terza ricevitrice e la quarta, e così in infinito si dilata. 10. E così, volgendo le cagioni sopra dette ne

le contrarie, si può vedere la ragione de la infamia, che simigliantemente si fa grande. Per che Virgilio dice nel quarto de lo Eneida che la Fama vive per essere mobile, e acquista grandezza per andare. 11. Apertamente adunque veder può chi vuole che la imagine per sola fama generata sempre è più ampia, quale che essa sia, che non è la cosa imaginata nel vero stato.

CAPITOLO IV

1. Mostrata ragione innanzi per che la fama dilata lo bene e lo male oltre la vera quantità, resta in questo capitolo a mostrar quelle ragioni che fanno vedere perchè la presenza ristringe per opposito; e mostrate quelle, si verrà lievemente al principale proposito, cioè de la sopra notata scusa. 2. Dico adunque che per tre cagioni la presenza fa la persona di meno valore ch'ella non è: l'una de le quali è puerizia, non dico d'etate ma d'animo; la seconda è invidia, - e queste sono ne lo giudicatore -; la terza è l'umana impuritade, e questa è ne lo giudicato. 3. La prima si può brievemente così ragionare. La maggiore parte de li uomini vivono secondo senso e non secondo ragione, a guisa di pargoli; e questi cotali non conoscono le cose se non semplicemente di fuori, e la loro bontade, la quale a debito fine è ordinata, non veggiono, per ciò che hanno chiusi li occhi de la ragione, li quali passano a veder quello. Onde tosto veggiono tutto ciò che ponno, e giudicano secondo la loro veduta. 4. E però che alcuna oppinione fanno ne l'altrui fama per udita, da la quale ne la presenza si discorda lo imperfetto giudicio che non secondo ragione ma secondo senso giudica solamente, quasi menzogna reputano ciò che prima udito hanno, e dispregiano la persona prima pregiata. 5. Onde appo costoro, che sono, ohmè, quasi tutti, la presenza ristringe l'una e l'altra qualitade. Questi cotali tosto sono vaghi e tosto sono sazii, spesso sono lieti e spesso tristi di brievi dilettazioni e tristizie, tosto amici e tosto nemici; ogni cosa fanno come pargoli, sanza uso di ragione. 6. La seconda si vede per queste ragioni: che paritade ne li viziosi è cagione d'invidia, e invidia è cagione di mal giudicio, però che non lascia la ragione argomentare per la cosa invidiata, e la potenza giudicativa è allora quel giudice che ode pur l'una parte. 7. Onde quando questi cotali veggiono la persona famosa, incontanente sono invidi, però che veggiono a s[è] pari membra e pari potenza, e temono, per la eccellenza di quel cotale, meno esser pregiati. 8. E questi non solamente passionati mal giudicano, ma, diffamando, fanno a li altri mal giudicare; per che appo costoro la presenza ristringe lo bene e lo male in ciascuno appresentato: e dico lo male, perchè molti, dilettandosi ne le male operazioni, hanno invidia a' mali operatori. 9. La terza si è l'umana impuritade, la quale si prende da la parte di colui ch'è giudicato, e non è sanza familiaritade e conversazione alcuna. Ad evidenza di questa, è da sapere che l'uomo è da più parti maculato, e, come dice Agustino, nullo è sanza macula. 10. Quando è l'uomo maculato d'una passione, a la quale tal volta non può resistere; quando è maculato d'alcuno disconcio membro; e quando è maculato d'alcuno colpo di fortuna; e quando è maculato d'infamia di parenti o d'alcuno suo prossimo: le quali cose la fama non porta

seco ma la presenza, e discuoprele per sua conversazione. 11. E queste macule alcuna ombra gittano sopra la chiarezza de la bontade, sì che la fanno parere men chiara e men valente. E questo è quello per che ciascuno profeta è meno onorato ne la sua patria; questo è quello per che l'uomo buono dee la sua presenza dare a pochi e la familiaritade dare a meno, acciò che 'l nome suo sia ricevuto, ma non spregiato. 12. E questa terza cagione può essere così nel male come nel bene, se le cose de la sua ragione si volgano ciascuna in suo contrario. Per che manifestamente si vede che per impuritade, sanza la quale non è alcuno, la presenza ristringe lo bene e lo male in ciascuno più che 'l vero non vuole. 13. Onde con ciò sia cosa che, come detto è di sopra, io mi sia quasi a tutti li Italici appresentato, per che fatto mi sono più vile forse che 'l vero non vuole non solamente a quelli a li quali mia fama era già corsa, ma eziandio a li altri, onde le mie cose sanza dubbio meco sono alleviate; conviemmi che con più alto stilo dea, ne la presente opera, un poco di gravezza, per la quale paia di maggiore autoritade. E questa scusa basti a la fortezza del mio comento.

CAPITOLO V

1. Poi che purgato è questo pane da le macule accidentali, rimane ad escusare lui da una sustanziale, cioè da l'essere vulgare e non latino; che per similitudine dire si può di biado e non di frumento. 2. E da ciò brievemente lo scusano tre ragioni, che mossero me ad eleggere innanzi questo che l'altro: l'una si muove da cautela di disconvenevole ordinazione; l'altra da prontezza di liberalitade; la terza da lo naturale amore a propria loquela. 3. E queste cose per sue ragioni, a sodisfacimento di ciò che riprendere si potesse per la notata ragione, intendo per ordine ragionare in questa forma. 4. Quella cosa che più adorna e commenda l'umana operazione, e che più dirittamente a buon fine la mena, sì è l'abito di quelle disposizioni che sono ordinate a lo inteso fine; sì com'è ordinata al fine de la cavalleria franchezza d'animo e fortezza di corpo. 5. E così colui che è ordinato a l'altrui servigio dee avere quelle disposizioni che sono a quello fine ordinate, sì come subiezione, conoscenza e obedienza, sanza le quali è ciascuno disordinato a ben servire; perchè, s'elli non è subietto in ciascuna condizione, sempre con fatica e con gravezza procede nel suo servigio e rade volte quello continua; e se elli non è [conoscente del bisogno del suo signore e a lui non è] obediente, non serve mai se non a suo senno e a suo volere, che è più servigio d'amico che di servo. 6. Dunque, a fuggire questa disordinazione, conviene questo comento, che è fatto invece di servo a le 'nfrascritte canzoni, esser subietto a quelle in ciascuna sua [condi]zione, ed essere conoscente del bisogno del suo signore e a lui obediente. 7. Le quali disposizioni tutte li mancavano, se latino e non volgare fosse stato, poi che le canzoni sono volgari. Chè, primamente, non era subietto ma sovrano, e per nobilità e per vertù e per bellezza. Per nobilità, perchè lo latino è perpetuo e non corruttibile, e lo volgare è non stabile e corruttibile. 8. Onde vedemo ne le scritture antiche de le comedie e tragedie latine, che non si possono transmutare, quello medesimo che oggi avemo; che non avviene del volgare, lo quale a piacimento artificiato si transmuta. 9. Onde vedemo ne le cittadi d'Italia, se bene volemo agguardare, da cinquanta anni in qua molti vocabuli essere spenti e nati e variati; onde se 'l picciol tempo così transmuta, molto più transmuta lo maggiore. Sì ch'io dico, che se coloro che partiron d'esta vita già sono mille anni tornassero a le loro cittadi, crederebbero la loro cittade essere occupata da gente strana, per la lingua da loro discordante. 10. Di questo si parlerà altrove più compiutamente in uno libello ch'io intendo di fare, Dio concedente, di Volgare Eloquenza. 11. Ancora, non era subietto ma sovrano per vertù. Ciascuna cosa è virtuosa in sua natura che fa quello a che ella è ordinata; e quanto meglio lo fa tanto è più virtuosa. Onde

dicemo uomo virtuoso che vive in vita contemplativa o attiva, a le quali è ordinato naturalmente; dicemo del cavallo virtuoso che corre forte e molto, a la qual cosa è ordinato; dicemo una spada virtuosa che ben taglia le dure cose, a che essa è ordinata. 12. Così lo sermone, lo quale è ordinato a manifestare lo concetto umano, è virtuoso quando quello fa, e più virtuoso quello che più lo fa; onde, con ciò sia cosa che lo latino molte cose manifesta concepute ne la mente che lo volgare far non può, sì come sanno quelli che hanno l'uno e l'altro sermone, più è la vertù sua che quella del volgare. 13. Ancora, non era subietto ma sovrano per bellezza. Quella cosa dice l'uomo essere bella cui le parti debitamente si rispondono, per che de la loro armonia resulta piacimento. Onde pare l'uomo essere bello, quando le sue membra debitamente si rispondono; e dicemo bello lo canto, quando le voci di quello, secondo debito de l'arte, sono intra sè rispondenti. 14. Dunque quello sermone è più bello ne lo quale più debitamente si rispondono [le parole; e più debitamente si rispondono] in latino che in volgare, però che lo volgare seguita uso, e lo latino arte: onde concedesi esser più bello, più virtuoso e più nobile. 15. Per che si conchiude lo principale intendimento, cioè che non sarebbe stato subietto a le canzoni, ma sovrano.

CAPITOLO VI

1. Mostrato come lo presente comento non sarebbe stato subietto a le canzoni volgari se fosse stato latino, resta a mostrare come non sarebbe stato conoscente, nè obediente a quelle; e poi sarà conchiuso come per cessare disconvenevoli disordinazioni fu mestiere volgarmente parlare. 2. Dico che ‘l latino non sarebbe stato servo conoscente al signore volgare per cotal ragione. La conoscenza del servo si richiede massimamente a due cose perfettamente conoscere. 3. L’una si è la natura del signore: onde sono signori di sì asinina natura che comandano lo contrario di quello che vogliono, e altri che sanza dire vogliono essere intesi, e altri che non vogliono che ‘l servo si muova a fare quello ch’è mestiere se nol comandano. 4. E perchè queste variazioni sono ne li uomini non intendo al presente mostrare, che troppo multiplicherebbe la digressione; se non in tanto, che dico in genere che cotali sono quasi bestie, a li quali la ragione fa poco prode. Onde, se ‘l servo non conosce la natura del suo signore, manifesto è che perfettamente servire nol può. 5. L’altra cosa è, che si conviene conoscere al servo, li amici del suo signore, chè altrimenti non li potrebbe onorare nè servire, e così non servirebbe perfettamente lo suo signore; con ciò sia cosa che li amici siano quasi parti d’un tutto, però che ‘l tutto loro è uno volere e uno non volere. 6. Nè lo comento latino avrebbe avuta la conoscenza di queste cose, che l’ha ‘l volgare medesimo. Che lo latino non sia conoscente del volgare e de’ suoi amici, così si pruova. Quelli che conosce alcuna cosa in genere, non conosce quella perfettamente: sì come, se conosce da lungi uno animale, non conosce quello perfettamente, perchè non sa se s’è cane o lupo o becco. 7. Lo latino conosce lo volgare in genere, ma non distinto: che se esso lo conoscesse distinto, tutti li volgari conoscerebbe, perchè non è ragione che l’uno più che l’altro conoscesse; e così in qualunque uomo fosse tutto l’abito del latino, sarebbe l’abito di conoscenza distinto de lo volgare. 8. Ma questo non è; chè uno abituato di latino non distingue, s’elli è d’Italia, lo volgare [inghilese] da lo tedesco; nè lo tedesco, lo volgare italico dal provenzale. Onde è manifesto che lo latino non è conoscente de lo volgare. 9. Ancora, non è conoscente de’ suoi amici, però ch’è impossibile conoscere li amici, non conoscendo lo principale; onde, se non conosce lo latino lo volgare, come provato è di sopra, impossibile è a lui conoscere li suoi amici. 10. Ancora, sanza conversazione o familiaritade impossibile è a conoscere li uomini: e lo latino non ha conversazione con tanti in alcuna lingua con quanti ha lo volgare di quella, al quale tutti sono amici; e per consequente non può conoscere li amici del volgare. 11. E non è contradizione ciò che dire si potrebbe, che lo latino pur conversa con alquanti amici de lo

volgare: chè però non è familiare di tutti, e così non è conoscente de li amici perfettamente; però che si richiede perfetta conoscenza, e non difettiva.

CAPITOLO VII

1. Provato che lo comento latino non sarebbe stato servo conoscente, dirò come non sarebbe stato obediente. 2. Obediente è quelli che ha la buona disposizione che si chiama obedienza. La vera obedienza conviene avere tre cose, sanza le quali essere non può: vuole essere dolce, e non amara; e comandata interamente, e non spontanea; e con misura, e non dismisurata. 3. Le quali tre cose era impossibile ad avere lo latino comento, e però era impossibile ad essere obediente. Che a lo latino fosse stato impossibile, come detto è, si manifesta per cotale ragione. 4. Ciascuna cosa che da perverso ordine procede è laboriosa, e per consequente è amara e non dolce, sì come dormire lo die e vegghiare la notte, e andare indietro e non innanzi. Comandare lo subietto a lo sovrano procede da ordine perverso - chè ordine diritto è lo sovrano a lo subietto comandare -, e così è amaro, e non dolce. E però che a l'amaro comandamento è impossibile dolcemente obedire, impossibile è, quando lo subietto comanda, la obedienza del sovrano essere dolce. 5. Dunque se lo latino è sovrano del volgare, come di sopra per più ragioni è mostrato, e le canzoni, che sono in persona di comandatore, sono volgari, impossibile è sua [obedienza] esser dolce. 6. Ancora: allora è la obedienza interamente comandata e da nulla parte spontanea, quando quello che fa chi fa obediendo non averebbe fatto sanza comandamento, per suo volere, nè tutto nè in parte. 7. E però se a me fosse comandato di portare due guarnacche in dosso, e sanza comandamento io mi portasse l'una, dico che la mia obedienza non è interamente comandata, ma in parte spontanea. E cotale sarebbe stata quella del comento latino; e per consequente non sarebbe stata obedienza comandata interamente. 8. Che fosse stata cotale, appare per questo: che lo latino sanza lo comandamento di questo signore averebbe esposite molte parti de la sua sentenza - ed espone, chi cerca bene le scritture latinamente scritte - che non lo fa lo volgare in parte alcuna. 9. Ancora: è l'obedienza con misura, e non dismisurata, quando al termine del comandamento va, e non più oltre; sì come la natura particulare è obediente a la universale, quando fa trentadue denti a l'uomo, e non più nè meno, e quando fa cinque dita ne la mano, e non più nè meno; e l'uomo è obediente a la giustizia [quando fa pagar lo debito de la pena, e non più nè meno che la giustizia] comanda, al peccatore. 10. Nè questo averebbe fatto lo latino, ma peccato averebbe non pur nel difetto, e non pur nel soperchio, ma in ciascuno; e così non sarebbe stata la sua obedienza misurata, ma dismisurata, e per consequente non sarebbe stato obediente. 11. Che non fosse stato lo latino empitore del comandamento del suo signore, e che ne fosse stato soperchiatore, leggermente si può mostrare. Questo signore, cioè queste

canzoni, a le quali questo comento è per servo ordinato, comandano e vogliono essere esposte a tutti coloro a li quali puote venire sì lo loro intelletto, che quando parlano elle siano intese; e nessuno dubita, che s'elle comandassero a voce, che questo non fosse lo loro comandamento. 12. E lo latino non l'averebbe esposte se non a' litterati, chè li altri non l'averebbero inteso. Onde con ciò sia cosa che molti più siano quelli che desiderano intendere quelle non litterati che litterati, seguitasi che non averebbe pieno lo suo comandamento come 'l volgare, che da li litterati e non litterati è inteso. 13. Anche, lo latino l'averebbe esposte a gente d'altra lingua, sì come a Tedeschi e Inghilesi e altri, e qui averebbe passato lo loro comandamento; chè contra loro volere, largo parlando dico, sarebbe essere esposta la loro sentenza colà dov'elle non la potessero con la loro bellezza portare. 14. E però sappia ciascuno che nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzata si può de la sua loquela in altra transmutare sanza rompere tutta sua dolcezza e armonia. 15. E questa è la cagione per che Omero non si mutò di greco in latino come l'altre scritture che avemo da loro. E questa è la cagione per che li versi del Salterio sono sanza dolcezza di musica e d'armonia; chè essi furono transmutati d'ebreo in greco e di greco in latino, e ne la prima transmutazione tutta quella dolcezza venne meno. 16. E così è conchiuso ciò che si promise nel principio del capitolo dinanzi a questo immediate.

CAPITOLO VIII

1. Quando è mostrato per le sufficienti ragioni come, per cessare disconvenevoli disordinamenti, converrebbe, [a le] nominate canzoni aprire e mostrare, comento volgare e non latino, mostrare intendo come ancora pronta liberalitate mi fece questo eleggere e l'altro lasciare. 2. Puotesi adunque la pronta liberalitate in tre cose notare, le quali seguitano questo volgare, e lo latino non averebbero seguitato. La prima è dare a molti; la seconda è dare utili cose; la terza è, sanza essere domandato lo dono, dare quello. 3. Chè dare a uno e giovare a uno è bene; ma dare a molti e giovare a molti è pronto bene, in quanto prende simiglianza da li benefici di Dio, che è universalissimo benefattore. 4. E ancora, dare a molti è impossibile sanza dare a uno, acciò che uno in molti sia inchiuso; ma dare a uno si può bene, sanza dare a molti. Però chi giova a molti fa l'uno bene e l'altro; chi giova a uno, fa pur un bene: onde vedemo li ponitori de le leggi massimamente pur a li più comuni beni tenere confissi li occhi, quelle componendo. 5. Ancora, dare cose non utili al prenditore pure è bene, in quanto colui che dà mostra almeno sè essere amico; ma non è perfetto bene, e così non è pronto: come quando uno cavaliere donasse ad uno medico uno scudo, e quando uno medico donasse a uno cavaliere scritti li Aphorismi d'Ipocràs, ovvero li Tegni di Galieno. Per che li savi dicono che la faccia del dono dee essere simigliante a quella del ricevitore, cioè a dire che si convegna con lui, e che sia utile: e in quello è detta pronta liberalitade di colui che così dicerne donando. 6. Ma però che li morali ragionamenti sogliono dare desiderio di vedere l'origine loro, brievemente in questo capitolo intendo mostrare quattro ragioni per che di necessitade lo dono, acciò che in quello sia pronta liberalitade, conviene essere utile a chi riceve. 7. Primamente, però che la vertù dee essere lieta, e non trista in alcuna sua operazione; onde, se 'l dono non è lieto nel dare e nel ricevere, non è in esso perfetta vertù, non è pronta. Questa letizia non può dare altro che utilitade, che rimane nel datore per lo dare, e che viene nel ricevitore per ricevere. 8. Nel datore adunque dee essere la providenza in far sì che de la sua parte rimagna l'utilitade de l'onestate, ch'è sopra ogni utilitade, e far sì che a lo ricevitore vada l'utilitade de l'uso de la cosa donata; e così sarà l'uno e l'altro lieto, e per consequente sarà più pronta la liberalitade. 9. Secondamente, però che la vertù dee muovere le cose sempre al migliore. Chè così come sarebbe biasimevole operazione fare una zappa d'una bella spada o fare un bel nappo d'una bella chitarra, così è biasimevole muover la cosa d'un luogo dove sia utile e portarla in parte dove sia meno utile. 10. E però che biasimevole è invano adoperare, biasimevole è non solamente a porre la cosa in parte dove sia meno

utile, ma eziandio in parte ove sia igualmente utile. 11. Onde, acciò che sia laudabile lo mutare de le cose, conviene sempre essere [al] migliore, per ciò che dee massimamente essere laudabile: e questo non [si] può fare nel dono se ‘l dono per transmutazione non viene più caro; nè più caro può venire, se esso non è più utile ad usare al ricevitore che al datore. Per che si conchiude che ‘l dono conviene essere utile a chi lo riceve, acciò che sia in esso pronta liberalitade. 12. Terziamente, però che la operazione de la vertù per sè dee essere acquistatrice d’amici; con ciò sia cosa che la nostra vita di quello abbisogni, e lo fine de la vertù sia la nostra vita essere contenta. Onde acciò che ‘l dono faccia lo ricevitore amico, conviene a lui essere utile, però che l’utilitade sigilla la memoria de la imagine del dono, l[a] quale è nutrimento de l’amistade; e tanto più forte, quanto essa è migliore. 13. Onde suole dire Martino: ‘Non caderà de la mia mente lo dono che mi fece Giovanni’. Per che, acciò che nel dono sia la sua vertù, la quale è liberalitade, e che essa sia pronta, conviene essere utile a chi riceve. 14. Ultimamente, però che la vertù dee avere atto libero e non sforzato. Atto libero è quando una persona va volentieri ad alcuna parte, che si mostra nel tener volto lo viso in quella; atto sforzato è quando contra voglia si va, che si mostra in non guardare ne la parte dove si va. 15. E allora sì guarda lo dono a quella parte, quando si dirizza al bisogno de lo ricevente. E però che dirizzarsi ad esso non si può se non sia utile, conviene, acciò che sia con atto libero la vertù, essere [utile] lo dono a la parte ov’elli vae, ch’è lo ricevitore; e per consequente conviene essere ne lo dono l’utilità de lo ricevitore, acciò che quinci sia pronta liberalitade. 16. La terza cosa, ne la quale si può notare la pronta liberalitade, si è dare non domandato: acciò che ‘l domandato è da una parte non vertù ma mercatantia, però che lo ricevitore compera, tutto che ‘l datore non venda. Per che dice Seneca che «nulla cosa più cara si compera che quella dove i prieghi si spendono». 17. Onde acciò che nel dono sia pronta liberalitade e che essa si possa in esso notare, allora, s[e] conviene esser netto d’ogni atto di mercatantia, conviene esser lo dono non domandato. 18. Perchè sì caro costa quello che si priega, non intendo qui ragionare, perchè sufficientemente si ragionerà ne l’ultimo trattato di questo libro.

CAPITOLO IX

1. Da tutte le tre sopra notate condizioni, che convegnono concorrere acciò che sia nel beneficio la pronta liberalitade, era lo comento latino [lontano], e lo volgare è con quelle, sì come si può manifestamente così contare. 2. Non avrebbe lo latino così servito a molti: chè se noi reducemo a memoria quello che di sovra è ragionato, li litterati fuori di lingua italica non averebbono potuto avere questo servigio, e quelli di questa lingua, se noi volemo bene vedere chi sono, troveremo che de' mille l'uno ragionevolmente non sarebbe stato servito; però che non l'averebbero ricevuto, tanto sono pronti ad avarizia che da ogni nobilitade d'animo li rimuove, la quale massimamente desidera questo cibo. 3. E a vituperio di loro dico che non si deono chiamare litterati, però che non acquistano la lettera per lo suo uso, ma in quanto per quella guadagnano denari o dignitate; sì come non si dee chiamare citarista chi tiene la cetera in casa per prestarla per prezzo, e non per usarla per sonare. 4. Tornando dunque al principale proposito, dico che manifestamente si può vedere come lo latino averebbe a pochi dato lo suo beneficio, ma lo volgare servirà veramente a molti. 5. Chè la bontà de l'animo, la quale questo servigio attende, è in coloro che per malvagia disusanza del mondo hanno lasciata la litteratura a coloro che l'hanno fatta di donna meretrice; e questi nobili sono principi, baroni, cavalieri, e molt'altra nobile gente, non solamente maschi ma femmine, che sono molti e molte in questa lingua, volgari e non litterati. 6. Ancora, non sarebbe lo latino stato datore d'utile dono, che sarà lo volgare. Però che nulla cosa è utile, se non in quanto è usata, nè è la sua bontade in potenza, che non è essere perfettamente; sì come l'oro, le margarite e li altri tesori che sono sotterrati.....; però che quelli che sono a mano de l'avaro sono in più basso loco che non è la terra là dove lo tesoro è nascosto. 7. Lo dono veramente di questo comento è la sentenza de le canzoni a le quali fatto è, la qual massimamente intende inducere li uomini a scienza e a vertù, sì come si vedrà per lo pelago del loro trattato. 8. Questa sentenza non possono non avere in uso quelli ne li quali vera nobilità è seminata per lo modo che si dirà nel quarto trattato; e questi sono quasi tutti volgari, sì come sono quelli nobili che di sopra, in questo capitolo, sono nominati. 9. E non ha contradizione perchè alcuno litterato sia di quelli; chè, sì come dice il mio maestro Aristotile nel primo de l'Etica, «una rondine non fa primavera». È adunque manifesto che lo volgare darà cosa utile, e lo latino non l'averebbe data. 10. Ancora, darà lo volgare dono non dimandato, che non l'averebbe dato lo latino: però che darà se medesimo per comento, che mai non fu domandato da persona; e questo non si può dire de lo latino, che per comento e per chiose a

molte scritture è già stato domandato, sì come ne' loro principii si può vedere apertamente in molte. 11. E così è manifesto che pronta liberalitade mi mosse al volgare anzi che a lo latino.

CAPITOLO X

1. Grande vuole essere la scusa, quando a così nobile convivio per le sue vivande, a così onorevole per li suoi convitati, s'appone pane di biado e non di frumento; e vuole essere evidente ragione che partire faccia l'uomo da quello che per li altri è stato servato lungamente, sì come di comentare con latino. 2. E però vuole essere manifesta la ragione, che de le nuove cose lo fine non è certo; acciò che la esperienza non è mai avuta onde le cose usate e servate sono e nel processo e nel fine commisurate. 3. Però si mosse la Ragione a comandare che l'uomo avesse diligente riguardo ad entrare nel nuovo cammino, dicendo che 'ne lo statuire le nuove cose evidente ragione dee essere quella che partire ne faccia da quello che lungamente è usato'. 4. Non si maravigli dunque alcuno se lunga è la digressione de la mia scusa, ma, sì come necessaria, la sua lunghezza paziente sostenga. 5. La quale proseguendo, dico che - poi ch'è manifesto come per cessare disconvenevole disordinazione e come per prontezza di liberalitade io mi mossi al volgare comento e lasciai lo latino - l'ordine de la intera scusa vuole ch'io mostri come a ciò mi mossi per lo naturale amore de la propria loquela; che è la terza e l'ultima ragione che a ciò mi mosse. 6. Dico che lo naturale amore principalmente muove l'amatore a tre cose: l'una si è a magnificare l'amato; l'altra è ad esser geloso di quello; l'altra è a difendere lui, sì come ciascuno può vedere continuamente avvenire. E queste tre cose mi fecero prendere lui, cioè lo nostro volgare, lo qual naturalmente e accidentalmente amo e ho amato. 7. Mossimi prima per magnificare lui. E che in ciò io lo magnifico, per questa ragione vedere si può; avvegna che per molte condizioni di grandezze le cose si possono magnificare, cioè fare grandi, e nulla fa tanto grande quanto la grandezza de la propia bontade, la quale è madre e conservatrice de l'altre grandezze; 8. onde nulla grandezza puote avere l'uomo maggiore che quella de la virtuosa operazione, che è sua propia bontade, per la quale le grandezze de le vere dignitadi, de li veri onori, de le vere potenze, de le vere ricchezze, de li veri amici, de la vera e chiara fama, e acquistate e conservate sono: 9. e questa grandezza do io a questo amico, in quanto quello elli di bontade avea in podere e occulto, io lo fo avere in atto e palese ne la sua propria operazione, che è manifestare conceputa sentenza. 10. Mossimi secondamente per gelosia di lui. La gelosia de l'amico fa l'uomo sollicito a lunga provedenza. Onde pensando che lo desiderio d'intendere queste canzoni, a alcuno illitterato avrebbe fatto lo comento latino transmutare in volgare, e temendo che 'l volgare non fosse stato posto per alcuno che l'avesse laido fatto parere, come fece quelli che transmutò lo latino de l'Etica - ciò fu Taddeo ipocratista -, providi a ponere lui, fidandomi

di me di più che d’un altro. 11. Mossimi ancora per difendere lui da molti suoi accusatori, li quali dispregiano esso e commendano li altri, massimamente quello di lingua d’oco, dicendo che è più bello e migliore quello che questo; partendose in ciò da la veritade. 12. Chè per questo comento la gran bontade del volgare di sì [si vedrà]; però che si vedrà la sua vertù, sì com’è per esso altissimi e novissimi concetti convenevolmente, sufficientemente e acconciamente, quasi come per esso latino, manifestare; [la quale non si potea bene manifestare] ne le cose rimate, per le accidentali adornezze che quivi sono connesse, cioè la rima e lo ri[tim]o e lo numero regolato: sì come non si può bene manifestare la bellezza d’una donna, quando li adornamenti de l’azzimare e de le vestimenta la fanno più ammirare che essa medesima. 13. Onde chi vuole ben giudicare d’una donna, guardi quella quando solo sua naturale bellezza si sta con lei, da tutto accidentale adornamento discompagnata: sì come sarà questo comento, nel quale si vedrà l’agevolezza de le sue sillabe, le proprietadi de le sue co[stru]zioni e le soavi orazioni che di lui si fanno; le quali chi bene agguarderà, vedrà essere piene di dolcissima e d’amabilissima bellezza. 14. Ma però che virtuosissimo è ne la ‘ntenzione mostrare lo difetto e la malizia de lo accusatore, dirò, a confusione di coloro che accusano la italica loquela, perchè a ciò fare si muovono; e di ciò farò al presente speziale capitolo, perchè più notevole sia la loro infamia.

CAPITOLO XI

1. A perpetuale infamia e depressione de li malvagi uomini d'Italia che commendano lo volgare altrui e lo loro proprio dispregiano, dico che la loro mossa viene da cinque abominevoli cagioni. 2. La prima è cechitade di discrezione; la seconda, maliziata escusazione; la terza, cupidità di vanagloria; la quarta, argomento d'invidia; la quinta e ultima, viltà d'animo, cioè pusillanimità. E ciascuna di queste retadi ha sì grande setta, che pochi sono quelli che siano da esse liberi. 3. De la prima si può così ragionare. Sì come la parte sensitiva de l'anima ha suoi occhi, con li quali apprende la differenza de le cose in quanto elle sono di fuori colorate, così la parte razionale ha suo occhio, con lo quale apprende la differenza de le cose in quanto sono ad alcuno fine ordinate: e questa è la discrezione. 4. E sì come colui che è cieco de li occhi sensibili va sempre secondo che li altri [il guidano, o] male [o] bene, così colui che è cieco del lume della discrezione sempre va nel suo giudicio secondo il grido, o diritto o falso; onde qualunque ora lo guidatore è cieco, conviene che esso e quello, anche cieco, ch'a lui s'appoggia, vegnano a mal fine. Però è scritto che «'l cieco al cieco farà guida, e così cadranno ambedue ne la fossa». 5. Questa grida è stata lungamente contro a nostro volgare, per le ragioni che di sotto si ragioneranno, appresso di questa. E li ciechi sopra notati, che sono quasi infiniti, con la mano in su la spalla a questi mentitori, sono caduti ne la fossa de la falsa oppinione, de la quale uscire non sanno. 6. De l'abito di questa luce discretiva massimamente le populari persone sono orbate; però che, occupate dal principio de la loro vita ad alcuno mestiere, dirizzano sì l'animo loro a quello per forza de la necessitate, che ad altro non intendono. 7. E però che l'abito di vertude, sì morale come intellettuale, subitamente avere non si può, ma conviene che per usanza s'acquisti, ed ellino la loro usanza pongono in alcuna arte e a discernere l'altre cose non curano, impossibile è a loro discrezione avere. 8. Per che incontra che molte volte gridano Viva la loro morte, e Muoia la loro vita, pur che alcuno cominci; e quest'è pericolosissimo difetto ne la loro cechitade. Onde Boezio giudica la populare gloria vana, perchè la vede sanza discrezione. 9. Questi sono da chiamare pecore, e non uomini; chè se una pecora si gittasse da una ripa di mille passi, tutte l'altre l'andrebbero dietro; e se una pecora per alcuna cagione al passare d'una strada salta, tutte l'altre saltano, eziandio nulla veggendo da saltare. 10. E io ne vidi già molte in uno pozzo saltare per una che dentro vi saltò, forse credendo saltare uno muro, non ostante che 'l pastore, piangendo e gridando, con le braccia e col petto dinanzi a esse si parava. 11. La seconda setta contra nostro volgare si fa per una maliziata scusa. Molti sono che amano più

d’essere tenuti maestri che d’essere, e per fuggir lo contrario, cioè di non esser tenuti, sempre danno colpa a la materia de l’arte apparecchiata, o vero a lo strumento; sì come lo mal fabbro biasima lo ferro appresentato a lui, e lo malo citarista biasima la cetera, credendo dare la colpa del mal coltello e del mal sonare al ferro e alla cetera, e levarla a sè. 12. Così sono alquanti, e non pochi, che vogliono che l’uomo li tegna dicitori; e per scusarsi dal non dire o dal dire male accusano e incolpano la materia, cioè lo volgare proprio, e commendano l’altro lo quale non è loro richesto di fabbricare. 13. E chi vuole vedere come questo ferro è da biasimare, guardi che opere ne fanno li buoni artefici, e conoscerà la malizia di costoro che, biasimando lui, s[è] credono scusare. 14. Contra questi cotali grida Tullio nel principio d’un suo libro che si chiama Libro di Fine de’ Beni, però che al suo tempo biasimavano lo latino romano e commendavano la gramatica greca per simiglianti cagioni che questi fanno vile lo parlare italico e prezioso quello di Provenza. 15. La terza setta contra nostro volgare si fa per cupiditate di vanagloria. Sono molti che per ritrarre cose poste in altrui lingua e commendare quella, credono più essere ammirati che ritraendo quelle de la sua. E sanza dubbio non è sanza loda d’ingegno apprendere bene la lingua strana; ma biasimevole è commendare quella oltre a la verità, per farsi glorioso di tale acquisto. 16. La quarta si fa da uno argomento d’invidia. Sì come è detto di sopra, la invidia è sempre dove è alcuna paritade. Intra li uomini d’una lingua è la paritade del volgare; e perchè l’uno quella non sa usare come l’altro, nasce invidia. 17. Lo invidioso poi argomenta, non biasimando colui che dice di non saper dire, ma biasima quello che è materia de la sua opera, per torre, dispregiando l’opera da quella parte, a lui che dice onore e fama; sì come colui che biasimasse lo ferro d’una spada, non per biasimo dare al ferro, ma a tutta l’opera del maestro. 18. La quinta e ultima setta si muove da viltà d’animo. Sempre lo magnanimo si magnifica in suo cuore, e così lo pusillanimo, per contrario, sempre si tiene meno che non è. 19. E perchè magnificare e parvificare sempre hanno rispetto ad alcuna cosa per comparazione a la quale si fa lo magnanimo grande e lo pusillanimo piccolo, avviene che ‘l magnanimo sempre fa minori li altri che non sono, e lo pusillanimo sempre maggiori. 20. E però che con quella misura che l’uomo misura se medesimo, misura le sue cose, che sono quasi parte di se medesimo, avviene che al magnanimo le sue cose sempre paiono migliori che non sono, e l’altrui men buone: lo pusillanimo sempre le sue cose crede valere poco, e l’altrui assai; onde molti per questa viltade dispregiano lo proprio volgare, e l’altrui pregiano. 21. E tutti questi cotali sono li abominevoli cattivi d’Italia che hanno a vile questo prezioso volgare, lo quale, s’è vile in alcuna [cosa], non è se non in quanto elli suona ne la bocca meretrice

di questi adulteri; a lo cui condutto vanno li ciechi de li quali ne la prima cagione feci menzione.

CAPITOLO XII

1. Se manifestamente per le finestre d'una casa uscisse fiamma di fuoco, e alcuno dimandasse se là dentro fosse il fuoco, e un altro rispondesse a lui di sì, non saprei bene giudicare qual di costoro fosse da schernire di più. E non altrimenti sarebbe fatta la dimanda e la risposta di colui e di me, che mi domandasse se amore a la mia loquela propria è in me e io li rispondesse di sì, appresso le su proposte ragioni. 2. Ma tuttavia, e a mostrare che non solamente amore ma perfettissimo amore di quella è in me, e a biasimare ancora li suoi avversarii ciò mostrando a chi bene intenderà, dirò come a lei fui fatto amico, e poi come l'amistà è confermata. 3. Dico che, sì come vedere si può che s[crive] Tullio in quello De Amicitia, non discordando da la sentenza del Filosofo aperta ne l'ottavo e nel nono de l'Etica, naturalmente la prossimitade e la bontade sono cagioni d'amore generative; lo beneficio, lo studio e la consuetudine sono cagioni d'amore accrescitive. E tutte queste cagioni vi sono state a generare e a confortare l'amore ch'io porto al mio volgare, sì come brievemente io mosterrò. 4. Tanto è la cosa più prossima quanto, di tutte le cose del suo genere, altrui è più unita: onde di tutti li uomini lo figlio è più prossimo al padre; di tutte l'arti la medicina è la più prossima al medico, e la musica al musico, però che a loro sono più unite che l'altre; di tutta la terra è più prossima quella dove l'uomo tiene se medesimo, però che è ad esso più unita. 5. E così lo volgare è più prossimo quanto è più unito, che uno e solo è prima ne la mente che alcuno altro, e che non solamente per sè è unito, ma per accidente, in quanto è congiunto con le più prossime persone, sì come con li parenti e con li propri cittadini e con la propria gente. 6. E questo è lo volgare proprio; lo quale è non prossimo, ma massimamente prossimo a ciascuno. Per che, se la prossimitade è seme d'amistà, come detto è di sopra, manifesto è ch'ella è de le cagioni stata de l'amore ch'io porto a la mia loquela, che è a me prossima più che l'altre. 7. La sopra detta cagione, cioè d'essere più unito quello ch'è solo prima in tutta la mente, mosse la consuetudine de la gente, che fanno li primogeniti succedere solamente, sì come più propinqui e perchè più propinqui, più amati. 8. Ancora, la bontade fece me a lei amico. E qui è da sapere che ogni bontade propria in alcuna cosa, è amabile in quella: sì come ne la maschiezza essere ben barbuto, e nella femminezza essere ben pulita di barba in tutta la faccia; sì come nel bracco bene odorare, e sì come nel veltro ben correre. 9. E quanto ella è più propria, tanto ancora è più amabile; onde, avvegna che ciascuna vertù sia amabile ne l'uomo, quella è più amabile in esso che è più umana, e questa è la giustizia, la quale è solamente ne la parte razionale o vero intellettuale, cioè ne la volontade. 10.

Questa è tanto amabile, che, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel quinto de l'Etica, li suoi nimici l'amano, sì come sono ladroni e rubatori; e però vedemo che 'l suo contrario, cioè la ingiustizia, massimamente è odiata, sì come è tradimento, ingratitudine, falsitade, furto, rapina, inganno e loro simili. 11. Li quali sono tanto inumani peccati, che ad iscusare sè de l'infamia di quelli, si concede da lunga usanza che uomo parli di sè, sì come detto è di sopra, e possa dire sè essere fedele e leale. 12. Di questa vertù innanzi dicerò più pienamente nel quartodecimo trattato; e qui lasciando, torno al proposito. Provato è adunque la bontà de la cosa più propria [più essere amabile in quella; per che, a mostrare quale in essa è più propria,] è da vedere quella che più in essa è amata e commendata, e quella è essa. 13. E noi vedemo che in ciascuna cosa di sermone lo bene manifestare del concetto sì è più amato e commendato: dunque è questa la prima sua bontade. E con ciò sia cosa che questa sia nel nostro volgare, sì come manifestato è di sopra in altro capitolo, manifesto è ched ella è de le cagioni stata de l'amore ch'io porto ad esso; poi che, sì come detto è, la bontade è cagione d'amore generativa.

CAPITOLO XIII

1. Detto come ne la propria loquela sono quelle due cose per le quali io sono fatto a lei amico, cioè prossimitade a me e bontà propria, dirò come per beneficio e concordia di studio e per benivolenza di lunga consuetudine l'amistà è confermata e fatta grande. 2. Dico, prima, ch'io per me ho da lei ricevuto dono di grandissimi benefici. E però è da sapere che intra tutti i benefici è maggiore quello che più è prezioso a chi riceve; e nulla cosa è tanto preziosa, quanto quella per la quale tutte l'altre si vogliono; e tutte l'altre cose si vogliono per la perfezione di colui che vuole. 3. Onde con ciò sia cosa che due perfezioni abbia l'uomo, una prima e una seconda - la prima lo fa essere, la seconda lo fa essere buono -, se la propria loquela m'è stata cagione e de l'una e de l'altra, grandissimo beneficio da lei ho ricevuto. E ch'ella sia stata a me d'essere [cagione, e ancora di buono essere] se per me non stesse, brievemente si può mostrare. 4. Non è secondo [lo Filosofo impossibile, sì come dice ne la Fisica al libro secondo] a una cosa esser più cagioni efficienti, avvegna che una sia massima de l'altre; onde lo fuoco e lo martello sono cagioni efficienti de lo coltello, avvegna che massimamente è il fabbro. Questo mio volgare fu congiugnitore de li miei generanti, che con esso parlavano, sì come 'l fuoco è disponitore del ferro al fabbro che fa lo coltello; per che manifesto è lui essere concorso a la mia generazione, e così essere alcuna cagione del mio essere. 5. Ancora, questo mio volgare fu introduttore di me ne la via di scienza, che è ultima perfezione, in quanto con esso io entrai ne lo latino e con esso mi fu mostrato: lo quale latino poi mi fu via a più innanzi andare. E così è palese, e per me conosciuto, esso essere stato a me grandissimo benefattore. 6. Anche, è stato meco d'uno medesimo studio, e ciò posso così mostrare. Ciascuna cosa studia naturalmente a la sua conservazione: onde, se lo volgare per sè studiare potesse, studierebbe a quella; e quella sarebbe acconciare sè a più stabilitade, e più stabilitade non potrebbe avere che in legar sè con numero e con rime. 7. E questo medesimo studio è stato mio, sì come tanto è palese che non dimanda testimonianza. Per che uno medesimo studio è stato lo suo e 'l mio; per che di questa concordia l'amistà è confermata e accresciuta. 8. Anche c'è stata la benivolenza de la consuetudine, chè dal principio de la mia vita ho avuta con esso benivolenza e conversazione, e usato quello diliberando, interpetrando e questionando. 9. Per che, se l'amistà s'accresce per la consuetudine, sì come sensibilmente appare, manifesto è che essa in me massimamente è cresciuta, che sono con esso volgare tutto mio tempo usato. 10. E così si vede essere a questa amistà concorse tutte le cagioni generative e accrescitive de l'amistade: per che

si conchiude che non solamente amore, ma perfettissimo amore sia quello ch'io a lui debbo avere e ho. 11. Così rivolgendo li occhi a dietro, e raccogliendo le ragioni prenotate, puotesi vedere questo pane, col quale si deono mangiare le infrascritte canzoni, essere sufficientemente purgato da le macule e da l'essere di biado; per che tempo è d'intendere a ministrare le vivande. 12. Questo sarà quello pane orzato del quale si satolleranno migliaia, e a me ne soperchieranno le sporte piene. Questo sarà luce nuova, sole nuovo, lo quale surgerà là dove l'usato tramonterà, e darà lume a coloro che sono in tenebre e in oscuritade per lo usato sole che a loro non luce.

TRATTATO SECONDO

CANZONE PRIMA

Voi che ‘ntendendo il terzo ciel movete,
udite il ragionar ch’è nel mio core,
ch’io nol so dire altrui, sì mi par novo.
El ciel che segue lo vostro valore,
gentili creature che voi sete,
mi tragge ne lo stato ov’io mi trovo.
Onde ‘l parlar de la vita ch’io provo,
par che si drizzi degnamente a vui:
però vi priego che lo mi ‘ntendiate.
Io vi dirò del cor la novitate,
come l’anima trista piange in lui,
e come un spirto contra lei favella,
che vien pe’ raggi de la vostra stella.

Suol esser vita de lo cor dolente
un soave penser, che se ne gia
molte fiate a’ pie’ del nostro Sire,
ove una donna gloriar vedia,
di cui parlava me sì dolcemente
che l’anima dicea: «Io men vo’ gire».
Or apparisce chi lo fa fuggire
e segnoreggia me di tal virtute,
che ‘l cor ne trema che di fuori appare.
Questi mi face una donna guardare,
e dice: «Chi veder vuol la salute,
faccia che li occhi d’esta donna miri,
sed e’ non teme angoscia di sospiri».

Trova contraro tal che lo distrugge
l’umil pensero, che parlar mi sole
d’un’angela che ‘n cielo è coronata.
L’anima piange, sì ancor len dole,
e dice: «Oh lassa a me, come si fugge
questo piatoso che m’ha consolata!»
De li occhi miei dice questa affannata:
«Qual ora fu che tal donna li vide!

e perchè non credeano a me di lei?
Io dicea: ‘Ben ne li occhi di costei
de’ star colui che le mie pari ancide!’
E non mi valse ch’io ne fossi accorta
che non mirasser tal, ch’io ne son morta».

«Tu non se’ morta, ma se’ ismarrita,
anima nostra, che sì ti lamenti»
dice uno spiritel d’amor gentile;
«chè quella bella donna che tu senti,
ha transmutata in tanto la tua vita,
che n’hai paura, sì se’ fatta vile!
Mira quant’ell’è pietosa e umile,
saggia e cortese ne la sua grandezza,
e pensa di chiamarla donna, omai!
Chè se tu non t’inganni, tu vedrai
di sì alti miracoli adornezza,
che tu dirai: ‘Amor, segnor verace,
ecco l’ancella tua; fa che ti piace’.»

Canzone, io credo che saranno radi
tanto la parli faticosa e forte.
Onde, se per ventura elli addivene
che tu dinanzi da persone vadi
che non ti paian d’essa bene accorte,
allor ti priego che ti riconforte,
dicendo lor, diletta mia novella:
«Ponete mente almen com’io son bella!»

CAPITOLO I

1. Poi che proemialmente ragionando, me ministro, è lo mio pane ne lo precedente trattato con sufficienza preparato, lo tempo chiama e domanda la mia nave uscir di porto; per che, dirizzato l'artimone de la ragione a l'òra del mio desiderio, entro in pelago con isperanza di dolce cammino e di salutevole porto e laudabile ne la fine de la mia cena. Ma però che più profittabile sia questo mio cibo, prima che vegna la prima vivanda voglio mostrare come mangiare si dee. 2. Dico che, sì come nel primo capitolo è narrato, questa sposizione conviene essere litterale e allegorica. E a ciò dare a intendere, si vuol sapere che le scritture si possono intendere e deonsi esponere massimamente per quattro sensi. 3. L'uno si chiama litterale, [e questo è quello che non si stende più oltre che la lettera de le parole fittizie, sì come sono le favole de li poeti. L'altro si chiama allegorico,] e questo è quello che si nasconde sotto 'l manto di queste favole, ed è una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna: sì come quando dice Ovidio che Orfeo facea con la cetera mansuete le fiere, e li arbori e le pietre a sè muovere; che vuol dire che lo savio uomo con lo strumento de la sua voce fa[r]ia mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori, e fa[r]ia muovere a la sua volontade coloro che non hanno vita di scienza e d'arte: e coloro che non hanno vita ragionevole alcuna sono quasi come pietre. 4. E perchè questo nascondimento fosse trovato per li savi, nel penultimo trattato si mosterrà. Veramente li teologi questo senso prendono altrimenti che li poeti; ma però che mia intenzione è qui lo modo de li poeti seguitare, prendo lo senso allegorico secondo che per li poeti è usato. 5. Lo terzo senso si chiama morale, e questo è quello che li lettori deono intentamente andare appostando per le scritture, ad utilitade di loro e di loro discenti: sì come appostare si può ne lo Evangelio, quando Cristo salio lo monte per transfigurarsi, che de li dodici Apostoli menò seco li tre; in che moralmente si può intendere che a le secretissime cose noi dovemo avere poca compagnia. 6. Lo quarto senso si chiama anagogico, cioè sovrasenso; e questo è quando spiritualmente si spone una scrittura, la quale ancora [sia vera] eziandio nel senso litterale, per le cose significate significa de le superne cose de l'etternal gloria sì, come vedere si può in quello canto del Profeta che dice che, ne l'uscita del popolo d'Israel d'Egitto, Giudea è fatta santa e libera. 7. Chè avvegna essere vera secondo la lettera sia manifesto, non meno è vero quello che spiritualmente s'intende, cioè che ne l'uscita de l'anima dal peccato, essa sia fatta santa e libera in sua potestate. 8. E in dimostrar questo, sempre lo litterale dee andare innanzi, sì come quello ne la cui sentenza li altri sono inchiusi, e sanza lo quale sarebbe impossibile ed inrazionale intendere a li altri, e massimamente a lo allegorico. 9.

È impossibile, però che in ciascuna cosa che ha dentro e di fuori, è impossibile venire al dentro se prima non si viene al di fuori: onde, con ciò sia cosa che ne le scritture [la litterale sentenza] sia sempre lo di fuori, impossibile è venire a l'altre, massimamente a l'allegorica, sanza prima venire a la litterale. 10. Ancora, è impossibile però che in ciascuna cosa, naturale ed artificiale, è impossibile procedere a la forma, sanza prima essere disposto lo subietto sopra che la forma dee stare: sì come impossibile la forma de l'oro è venire, se la materia, cioè lo suo subietto, non è digesta e apparecchiata; e la forma de l'arca venire, se la materia, cioè lo legno, non è prima disposta e apparecchiata. 11. Onde con ciò sia cosa che la litterale sentenza sempre sia subietto e materia de l'altre, massimamente de l'allegorica, impossibile è prima venire a la conoscenza de l'altre che a la sua. 12. Ancora, è impossibile però che in ciascuna cosa, naturale ed artificiale, è impossibile procedere, se prima non è fatto lo fondamento, sì come ne la casa e sì come ne lo studiare: onde, con ciò sia cosa che 'l dimostrare sia edificazione di scienza, e la litterale dimostrazione sia fondamento de l'altre, massimamente de l'allegorica, impossibile è a l'altre venire prima che a quella. 13. Ancora, posto che possibile fosse, sarebbe inrazionale, cioè fuori d'ordine, e però con molta fatica e con molto errore si procederebbe. Onde, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel primo de la Fisica, la natura vuole che ordinatamente si proceda ne la nostra conoscenza, cioè procedendo da quello che conoscemo meglio in quello che conoscemo non così bene: dico che la natura vuole, in quanto questa via di conoscere è in noi naturalmente innata. 14. E però se li altri sensi dal litterale sono meno intesi - che sono, sì come manifestamente pare -, inrazionabile sarebbe procedere ad essi dimostrare, se prima lo litterale non fosse dimostrato. 15. Io adunque, per queste ragioni, tuttavia sopra ciascuna canzone ragionerò prima la litterale sentenza, e appresso di quella ragionerò la sua allegoria, cioè la nascosa veritade; e talvolta de li altri sensi toccherò incidentemente, come a luogo e a tempo si converrà.

CAPITOLO II

1. Cominciando adunque, dico che la stella di Venere due fiate rivolta era in quello suo cerchio che la fa parere serotina e matutina, secondo diversi tempi, appresso lo trapassamento di quella Beatrice beata che vive in cielo con li angeli e in terra con la mia anima, quando quella gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la Vita Nuova, parve primamente, accompagnata d'Amore, a li occhi miei e prese luogo alcuno ne la mia mente. 2. E sì come è ragionato per me ne lo allegato libello, più da sua gentilezza che da mia elezione venne ch'io ad essere suo consentisse; chè passionata di tanta misericordia si dimostrava sopra la mia vedovata vita, che li spiriti de li occhi miei a lei si fero massimamente amici. E così fatti, dentro [me] lei poi fero tale, che lo mio beneplacito fu contento a disposarsi a quella imagine. 3. Ma però che non subitamente nasce amore e fassi grande e viene perfetto, ma vuole tempo alcuno e nutrimento di pensieri, massimamente là dove sono pensieri contrari che lo 'mpediscano, convenne, prima che questo nuovo amore fosse perfetto, molta battaglia intra lo pensiero del suo nutrimento e quello che li era contraro, lo quale per quella gloriosa Beatrice tenea ancora la rocca de la mia mente. 4. Però che l'uno era soccorso de la parte [de la vista] dinanzi continuamente, e l'altro de la parte de la memoria di dietro. E lo soccorso dinanzi ciascuno die crescea, che far non potea l'altro, con[tr]o quello, chè impediva in alcuno modo a dare indietro il volto; per che a me parve sì mirabile, e anche duro a sofferire, che io nol potei sostenere. 5. E quasi esclamando, e per iscusare me de la v[a]ri[e]tade ne la quale parea me avere manco di fortezza, dirizzai la voce mia in quella parte onde procedeva la vittoria del nuovo pensiero, ch'era virtuosissimo sì come vertù celestiale; e cominciai a dire: Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete. 6. A lo 'ntendimento de la quale canzone bene imprendere, conviene prima conoscere le sue parti, sì che leggiero sarà poi lo suo intendimento a vedere. Acciò che più non sia mestiere di predicere queste parole per le sposizioni de l'altre, dico che questo ordine, che in questo trattato si prenderà, tenere intendo per tutti li altri. 7. Adunque dico che la canzone proposta è contenuta da tre parti principali. La prima è lo primo verso di quella: ne la quale s'inducono a udire ciò che dire intendo certe Intelligenze, o vero per più usato modo volemo dire Angeli, le quali sono a la revoluzione del cielo di Venere, sì come movitori di quello. 8. La seconda è li tre versi che appresso del primo sono: ne la quale si manifesta quel che dentro spiritualmente si sentiva intra' diversi pensieri. 9. La terza è lo quinto e l'ultimo verso: ne la quale sì vuole l'uomo parlare a l'opera medesima, quasi a

confortare quella. E queste tutte e tre parti, per ordine sono, come è detto di sopra, a dimostrare.

CAPITOLO III

1. A più latinamente vedere la sentenza litterale, a la quale ora s'intende, de la prima parte sopra divisa, è da sapere chi e quanti sono costoro che son chiamati a l'audienza mia, e quale è questo terzo cielo lo quale dico loro muovere: e prima dirò del cielo, poi dirò di loro a cu' io parlo. 2. E avvegna che quelle cose, per rispetto de la veritade, assai poco sapere si possano, quel cotanto che l'umana ragione ne vede ha più dilettazione che 'l molto e 'l certo de le cose de le quali si giudica [secondo lo senso], secondo la sentenza del Filosofo in quello de li Animali. 3. Dico adunque, che del numero de li cieli e del sito diversamente è sentito da molti, avvegna che la veritade a l'ultimo sia trovata. Aristotile credette, seguitando solamente l'antica grossezza de li astrologi, che fossero pure otto cieli, de li quali lo estremo, e che contenesse tutto, fosse quello dove le stelle fisse sono, cioè la spera ottava; e che di fuori da esso non fosse altro alcuno. 4. Ancora credette che lo cielo del Sole fosse immediato con quello de la Luna, cioè secondo a noi. E questa sua sentenza così erronea può vedere chi vuole nel secondo De Celo et Mundo, ch'è nel secondo de' libri naturali. Veramente elli di ciò si scusa nel duodecimo de la Metafisica, dove mostra bene sè avere seguito pur l'altrui sentenza là dove d'astrologia li convenne parlare. 5. Tolomeo poi, accorgendosi che l'ottava spera si movea per più movimenti, veggendo lo cerchio suo partire da lo diritto cerchio, che volge tutto da oriente in occidente, costretto da li principii di filosofia, che di necessitade vuole uno primo mobile semplicissimo, puose un altro cielo essere fuori de lo Stellato, lo quale facesse questa revoluzione da oriente in occidente: la quale dico che si compie quasi in ventiquattro ore, [cioè in ventitrè ore] e quattordici parti de le quindici d'un'altra, grossamente assegnando. 6. Sì che secondo lui, secondo quello che si tiene in astrologia ed in filosofia poi che quelli movimenti furon veduti, sono nove cieli mobili; lo sito de li quali è manifesto e diterminato, secondo che per un'arte che si chiama perspettiva, e [per] arismetrica e geometria, sensibilmente e ragionevolmente è veduto, e per altre esperienze sensibili: sì come ne lo eclipsi del sole appare sensibilmente la luna essere sotto lo sole, e sì come per testimonianza d'Aristotile, che vide con li occhi (secondo che dice nel secondo De Celo et Mundo) la luna, essendo nuova, entrare sotto a Marte da la parte non lucente, e Marte stare celato tanto che rapparve da l'altra parte lucente de la luna, ch'era verso occidente. [IV]. 7. Ed è l'ordine del sito questo, che lo primo che numerano è quello dove è la Luna; lo secondo è quello dov'è Mercurio; lo terzo è quello dov'è Venere; lo quarto è quello dove è lo Sole; lo quinto è quello di Marte; lo sesto è quello di Giove; lo settimo è quello

di Saturno; l’ottavo è quello de le Stelle; lo nono è quello che non è sensibile se non per questo movimento che è detto di sopra; lo quale chiamano molti Cristallino, cioè diafano, o vero tutto trasparente. 8. Veramente, fuori di tutti questi, li cattolici pongono lo cielo Empireo, che è a dire cielo di fiamma o vero luminoso; e pongono esso essere immobile per avere in sè, secondo ciascuna parte, ciò che la sua materia vuole. 9. E questo è cagione al Primo Mobile per avere velocissimo movimento; chè per lo ferventissimo appetito ch’è in ciascuna parte di quello nono cielo, che è immediato a quello, d’essere congiunta con ciascuna parte di quello divinissimo ciel quieto, in quello si rivolve con tanto desiderio, che la sua velocitade è quasi incomprensibile. 10. E quieto e pacifico è lo luogo di quella somma Deitade che sola [sè] compiutamente vede. Questo loco è di spiriti beati, secondo che la Santa Chiesa vuole, che non può dire menzogna; e Aristotile pare ciò sentire, a chi bene lo ‘ntende, nel primo De Celo et Mundo. 11. Questo è lo soprano edificio del mondo, nel quale tutto lo mondo s’inchiude, e di fuori dal quale nulla è; ed esso non è in luogo ma formato fu solo ne la prima Mente, la quale li Greci dicono Protonoè. Questa è quella magnificenza de la quale parlò il Salmista quando dice a Dio: «Levata è la magnificenza tua sopra li cieli». 12. E così ricogliendo ciò che ragionato è, pare che diece cieli siano, de li quali quello di Venere sia lo terzo, del quale si fa menzione in quella parte che mostrare intendo. 13. Ed è da sapere che ciascuno cielo di sotto al Cristallino ha due poli fermi, quanto a sè; e lo nono li ha fermi e fissi, e non mutabili secondo alcuno respetto. E ciascuno, sì lo nono come li altri, hanno un cerchio, che si può chiamare equatore del suo cielo proprio; lo quale igualmente in ciascuna parte de la sua revoluzione è rimoto da l’uno polo e da l’altro, come può sensibilmente vedere chi volge un pomo, o altra cosa ritonda. E questo cerchio ha più rattezza nel muovere che alcuna parte del suo cielo, in ciascuno cielo, come può vedere chi bene considera. 14. E ciascuna parte, quant’ella più è presso ad esso, tanto più rattamente si muove; quanto più n’è remota e più presso al polo, più è tarda, però che la sua revoluzione è minore, e conviene essere in uno medesimo tempo, di necessitade, con la maggiore. 15. Dico ancora, che quanto lo cielo più è presso al cerchio equatore tanto è più nobile per comparazione a li suoi [poli], però che ha più movimento e più attualitade e più vita e più forma, e più tocca di quello che è sopra sè, e per consequente più è virtuoso. Onde le stelle del Cielo Stellato sono più piene di vertù tra loro quanto più sono presso a questo cerchio. 16. E in sul dosso di questo cerchio, nel cielo di Venere, del quale al presente si tratta, è una speretta che per se medesima in esso cielo si volge; lo cerchio de la quale li astrologi chiamano epiciclo. E sì come la grande spera due poli volge, così questa picciola, e così ha questa picciola lo cerchio equatore, e così è più nobile quanto

è più presso di quello; e in su l’arco, o vero dosso, di questo cerchio è fissa la lucentissima stella di Venere. 17. E avvegna che detto sia essere diece cieli secondo la stretta veritade, questo numero non li comprende tutti; chè questo di cui è fatta menzione, cioè l’epiciclo nel quale è fissa la stella, è uno cielo per sè, o vero spera, e non ha una essenza con quello che ‘l porta, avvegna che più sia connaturato ad esso che li altri; e con esso è chiamato uno cielo, e dinominasi l’uno e l’altro da la stella. 18. Come li altri cieli e l’altre stelle siano, non è al presente da trattare: basti ciò che detto è de la veritade del terzo cielo, del quale al presente intendo e del quale compiutamente è mostrato quello che al presente n’è mestiere.

CAPITOLO IV [V]

1. Poi ch'è mostrato nel precedente capitolo quale è questo terzo cielo e come in se medesimo è disposto, resta di dimostrare chi sono questi che 'l muovono. 2. È adunque da sapere primamente che li movitori di quelli sono sustanze separate da materia, cioè intelligenze, le quali la volgare gente chiamano Angeli. E di queste creature, sì come de li cieli, diversi diversamente hanno sentito, avvegna che la veritade sia trovata. 3. Furono certi filosofi, de' quali pare essere Aristotile ne la sua Metafisica (avvegna che nel primo di Cielo incidentemente paia sentire altrimenti), che credettero solamente essere tante queste, quante circulazioni fossero ne li cieli, e non più, dicendo che l'altre sarebbero state etternalmente indarno, sanza operazione; ch'era impossibile, con ciò sia cosa che loro essere sia loro operazione. 4. Altri furono, sì come Plato, uomo eccellentissimo, che puosero non solamente tante Intelligenze quanti sono li movimenti del cielo, ma eziandio quante sono le spezie de le cose (cioè le maniere de le cose): sì come è una spezie tutti li uomini, e un'altra tutto l'oro, e un'altra tutte le larghezze, e così di tutte. 5. E volsero che sì come le Intelligenze de li cieli sono generatrici di quelli, ciascuna del suo, così queste fossero generatrici de l'altre cose ed essempli, ciascuna de la sua spezie; e chiamale Plato 'idee', che tanto è a dire quanto forme e nature universali. 6. Li gentili le chiamano Dei e Dee, avvegna che non così filosoficamente intendessero quelle come Plato, e adoravano le loro imagini, e faceano loro grandissimi templi: sì come a Giuno, la quale dissero dea di potenza; sì come a Pallade o vero Minerva, la quale dissero dea di sapienza; sì come a Vulcano, lo quale dissero dio del fuoco, ed a Cerere, la quale dissero dea de la biada. 7. Le quali cose e oppinioni manifesta la testimonianza de' poeti, che ritraggono in parte alcuna lo modo de' gentili e ne li sacrifici e ne la loro fede; e anco si manifesta in molti nomi antichi rimasi o per nomi o per sopranomi a lochi e antichi edifici, come può bene ritrovare chi vuole. 8. E avvegna che per ragione umana queste oppinioni di sopra fossero fornite, e per esperienza non lieve, la veritade ancora per loro veduta non fue e per difetto di ragione e per difetto d'ammaestramento; chè pur per ragione veder si può in molto maggiore numero esser le creature sopra dette, che non sono li effetti che [da] li uomini si possono intendere. 9. E l'una ragione è questa. Nessuno dubita, nè filosofo nè gentile nè giudeo nè cristiano nè alcuna setta, ch'elle non siano piene di tutta beatitudine, o tutte o la maggior parte, e che quelle beate non siano in perfettissimo stato. 10. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che quella che è qui l'umana natura non pur una beatitudine abbia, ma due, sì com'è quella de la vita civile, e quella de la contemplativa, inrazionale sarebbe se noi vedemo quelle avere la

beatitudine de la vita attiva, cioè civile, nel governare del mondo, e non avessero quella de la contemplativa, la quale è più eccellente e più divina. 11. E con ciò sia cosa che quella che ha la beatitudine del governare non possa l'altra avere, perchè lo 'ntelletto loro è uno e perpetuo, conviene essere altre fuori di questo ministerio che solamente vivano speculando. 12. E perchè questa vita è più divina, e quanto la cosa è più divina è più di Dio simigliante, manifesto è che questa vita è da Dio più amata; e se ella è più amata, più le è la sua beatanza stata larga; e se più l'è stata larga, più viventi le ha dato che a l'altrui. Per che si conchiude che troppo maggior numero sia quello di quelle creature che li effetti non dimostrano. 13. E non è contra quello che par dire Aristotile nel decimo de l'Etica, che a le sustanze separate convegna pure la speculativa vita. Come pure la speculativa convegna loro, pure a la speculazione di certe segue la circulazione del cielo, che è del mondo governo; lo quale è quasi una ordinata civilitade, intesa ne la speculazione de li motori. 14. L'altra ragione sì è che nullo effetto è maggiore de la cagione, poi che la cagione non può dare quello che non ha; ond'è, con ciò sia cosa che lo divino intelletto sia cagione di tutto, massimamente de lo 'ntelletto umano, che lo umano quello non soperchia, ma da esso è improporzionalmente soperchiato. 15. Dunque se noi, per le ragioni di sopra e per molt'altre, intendiamo Iddio aver potuto fare innumerabili quasi creature spirituali, manifesto è lui questo avere fatto maggiore numero. Altre ragioni si possono vedere assai, ma queste bastino al presente. 16. Nè si meravigli alcuno se queste e altre ragioni di ciò avere potemo, non sono del tutto dimostrate; che però medesimamente dovemo ammirare loro eccellenza - la quale soverchia gli occhi de la mente umana, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de la Metafisica -, e affermar loro essere. 17. Poi che non avendo di loro alcuno senso (dal quale comincia la nostra conoscenza), pure risplende nel nostro intelletto alcuno lume de la vivacissima loro essenza, in quanto vedemo le sopra dette ragioni, e molt'altre; sì come afferma chi ha li occhi chiusi l'aere essere luminoso, per un poco di splendore, o vero raggio, c[om]e passa per le pupille del vispistrello: chè non altrimenti sono chiusi li nostri occhi intellettuali, mentre che l'anima è legata e incarcerata per li organi del nostro corpo.

CAPITOLO V [VI]

1. Detto è che per difetto d'ammaestramento li antichi la veritade non videro de le creature spirituali, avvegna che quello popolo d'Israel fosse in parte da li suoi profeti ammaestrato, «ne li quali, per molte maniere di parlare e per molti modi, Dio avea loro parlato», sì come l'Apostolo dice. 2. Ma noi semo di ciò ammaestrati da colui che venne da quello, da colui che le fece, da colui che le conserva, cioè da lo Imperadore de l'universo, che è Cristo, figliuolo del sovrano Dio e figliuolo di Maria Vergine, femmina veramente e figlia di Ioacchino e d'Adamo: uomo vero, lo quale fu morto da noi, per che ci recò vita. 3. 'Lo qual fu luce che allumina noi ne le tenebre', sì come dice Ioanni Evangelista, e disse a noi la veritade di quelle cose che noi sapere sanza lui non potavamo, nè veder veramente. 4. La prima cosa e lo primo secreto che ne mostrò fu una de le creature predette: ciò fu quello suo grande legato che venne a Maria, giovinetta donzella di tredici anni, da parte del Sanator celestiale. Questo nostro Salvatore con la sua bocca disse che 'l Padre li potea dare molte legioni d'angeli; questi non negò, quando detto li fu che 'l Padre avea comandato a li angeli che li ministrassero e servissero. 5. Per che manifesto è a noi quelle creature [essere] in lunghissimo numero; per che la sua sposa e secretaria Santa Ecclesia - de la quale dice Salomone: «Chi è questa che ascende del diserto, piena di quelle cose che dilettano, appoggiata sopra l'amico suo?» - dice, crede e predica quelle nobilissime creature quasi innumerabili. E partele per tre gerarchie, che è a dire tre principati santi o vero divini, e ciascuna gerarchia ha tre ordini; sì che nove ordini di creature spirituali la Chiesa tiene e afferma. 6. Lo primo è quello de li Angeli, lo secondo de li Arcangeli, lo terzo de li Troni; e questi tre ordini fanno la prima gerarchia: non prima quanto a nobilitade, non a creazione (chè più sono l'altre nobili e tutte furono insieme create), ma prima quanto al nostro salire a loro altezza. Poi sono le Dominazioni; appresso le Virtuti; poi li Principati: e questi fanno la seconda gerarchia. Sopra questi sono le Potestati e li Cherubini, e sopra tutti sono li Serafini: e questi fanno la terza gerarchia. 7. Ed è potissima ragione de la loro speculazione e lo numero in che sono le gerarchie e quello in che sono li ordini. Chè con ciò sia cosa che la Maestà divina sia in tre persone, che hanno una sustanza, di loro si puote triplicemente contemplare. 8. Chè si può contemplare de la potenza somma del Padre; la quale mira la prima gerarchia, cioè quella che è prima per nobilitade e che ultima noi annoveriamo. E puotesi contemplare la somma sapienza del Figliuolo; e questa mira la seconda gerarchia. E puotesi contemplare la somma e ferventissima caritade de lo Spirito Santo; e questa mira l'ultima gerarchia, la quale, più propinqua, a noi porge de li

doni che essa riceve. 9. E con ciò sia cosa che ciascuna persona ne la divina Trinitade triplicemente si possa considerare, sono in ciascuna gerarchia tre ordini che diversamente contemplano. Puotesi considerare lo Padre, non avendo rispetto se non ad esso; e questa contemplazione fanno li Serafini, che veggiono più de la Prima Cagione che nulla angelica natura. 10. Puotesi considerare lo Padre secondo che ha relazione al Figlio, cioè come da lui si parte e come con lui sè unisce; e questo contemplano li Cherubini. Puotesi ancora considerare lo Padre secondo che da lui procede lo Spirito Santo, e come da lui si parte e come con lui sè unisce; e questa contemplazione fanno le Potestadi. 11. E per questo modo si puote speculare del Figlio e de lo Spirito Santo: per che convengono essere nove maniere di spiriti contemplativi, a mirare ne la luce che sola se medesima vede compiutamente. 12. E non è qui da tacere una parola. Dico che di tutti questi ordini si perderono alquanti tosto che furono creati, forse in numero de la decima parte; a la quale restaurare fu l'umana natura poi creata. Li numeri, li ordini, le gerarchie narrano li cieli mobili che sono nove, e lo decimo annunzia essa unitade e stabilitade di Dio. E però dice lo Salmista: «Li cieli narrano la gloria di Dio, e l'opere de le sue mani annunzia lo fermamento». 13. Per che ragionevole è credere che li movitori del cielo de la Luna siano de l'ordine de li Angeli, e quelli di Mercurio siano li Arcangeli, e quelli di Venere siano li Troni; li quali, naturati de l'amore del Santo Spirito, fanno la loro operazione, connaturale ad essi, cioè lo movimento di quello cielo, pieno d'amore, dal quale prende la forma del detto cielo uno ardore virtuoso per lo quale le anime di qua giuso s'accendono ad amore, secondo la loro disposizione. 14. E perchè li antichi s'accorsero che quello cielo era qua giù cagione d'amore, dissero Amore essere figlio di Venere, sì come testimonia Vergilio nel primo de lo Eneida, ove dice Venere ad Amore: «Figlio, vertù mia, figlio del sommo padre, che li dardi di Tifeo non curi»; e Ovidio, nel quinto di Metamorphoseos, quando dice che Venere disse ad Amore: «Figlio, armi mie, potenzia mia». 15. E sono questi Troni, che al governo di questo cielo sono dispensati, in numero non grande, de lo quale per li filosofi e per li astrologi diversamente è sentito, secondo che diversamente sentiro de le sue circulazioni; avvenga che tutti siano accordati in questo, che tanti sono quanti movimenti esso fae. 16. Li quali, secondo che nel libro de l'Aggregazion[i] de le Stelle epilogato si truova da la migliore dimostrazione de li astrologi, sono tre: uno, secondo che la stella si muove per lo suo epiciclo; l'altro, secondo che lo epiciclo si muove con tutto il cielo igualmente con quello del Sole; lo terzo, secondo che tutto quello cielo si muove seguendo lo movimento de la stellata spera, da occidente a oriente, in cento anni uno grado. Sì che a questi tre movimenti sono tre movitori. 17. Ancora si muove tutto questo cielo e rivolgesi con lo epiciclo da oriente in

occidente, ogni dì naturale una fiata: lo qual movimento, se esso è da intelletto alcuno, o se esso è da la rapina del Primo Mobile, Dio lo sa; che a me pare presuntuoso a giudicare. 18. Questi movitori muovono, solo intendendo, la circulazione in quello subietto propio che ciascuno muove. La forma nobilissima del cielo, che ha in sè principio di questa natura passiva, gira, toccata da vertù motrice che questo intende: e dico toccata, non corporalmente, per tatto di vertù la quale si dirizza in quello. E questi movitori sono quelli a li quali s’intende di parlare, ed a cui io fo mia dimanda.

CAPITOLO VI [VII]

[VII]. 1. Secondo che di sopra, nel terzo capitolo di questo trattato, si disse, ch'a bene intendere la prima parte de la proposta canzone convenia ragionare di quelli cieli e de li loro motori, ne li tre precedenti capitoli è ragionato. Dico adunque a quelli ch'io mostrai sono movitori del cielo di Venere: O voi che 'ntendendo - cioè con lo intelletto solo, come detto è di sopra, - lo terzo cielo movete, Udite il ragionare; e non dico udite perch'elli odano alcuno suono, ch'elli non hanno senso, ma dico udite, cioè con quello udire ch'elli hanno, ch'è intendere per intelletto. 2. Dico: Udite il ragionar lo quale è nel mio core: cioè dentro da me, chè ancora non è di fuori apparito. E da sapere è che in tutta questa canzone, secondo l'uno senso e l'altro lo 'core' si prende per lo secreto dentro, e non per altra spezial parte de l'anima e del corpo. 3. Poi li ho chiamati ad udire quello ch'io voglio, assegno due ragioni per che io convenevolemente deggio loro parlare. L'una si è la novitade de la mia condizione, la quale, per non essere da li altri uomini esperta, non sarebbe così da loro intesa come da coloro che 'ntendono li loro effetti ne la loro operazione; e questa ragione tocco quando dico: Ch'io nol so dire dire altrui, sì mi par novo. 4. L'altra ragione è: quand'uomo riceve beneficio, o vero ingiuria, prima de' quello retraere a chi liele fa, se può, che ad altri; acciò che se ello è beneficio, esso che lo riceve si mostri conoscente inver lo benefattore; e s'ella è ingiuria, induca lo fattore a buona misericordia con le dolci parole. 5. E questa ragione tocco, quando dico: El ciel che segue lo vostro valore, Gentili creature che voi sete, Mi tragge ne lo stato ov'io mi trovo. Ciò è a dire: l'operazione vostra, cioè la vostra circulazione, è quella che m'ha tratto ne la presente condizione. Però conchiudo e dico che 'l mio parlare a loro dee essere, sì come detto è; e questo dico qui: Onde 'l parlar de la vita ch'io provo, Par che si drizzi degnamente a vui. E dopo queste ragioni assegnate, priego loro de lo 'ntendere quando dico: Però vi priego che lo mi 'ntendiate. 6. Ma però che in ciascuna maniera di sermone lo dicitore massimamente dee intendere a la persuasione, cioè a l'abbellire, de l'audienza sì come a quella ch'è principio di tutte l'altre persuasioni come li rettorici [s]anno; e potentissima persuasione sia, a rendere l'uditore attento, promettere di dire nuove e grandissime cose; seguito io, a la preghiera fatta de l'audienza, questa persuasione, cioè, dico, abbellimento, annunziando loro la mia intenzione, la quale è di dire nuove cose, cioè la divisione ch'è ne la mia anima, e grandi cose, cioè lo valore de la loro stella. E questo dico in quelle ultime parole di questa prima parte: Io vi dirò del cor la novitate, Come l'anima trista piange in lui, E come un spirto contra lei favella, Che vien pe' raggi de la vostra stella. 7. E a

pieno intendimento di queste parole, dico che questo [spirito] non è altro che uno frequente pensiero a questa nuova donna commendare e abbellire; e questa anima non è altro che un altro pensiero accompagnato di consentimento, che, repugnando a questo, commenda e abbellisce la memoria di quella gloriosa Beatrice. 8. Ma però che ancora l'ultima sentenza de la mente, cioè lo consentimento, si tenea per questo pensiero che la memoria aiutava, chiamo lui anima e l'altro spirito; sì come chiamare solemo la cittade quelli che la tengono, e non coloro che la combattono, avvegna che l'uno e l'altro sia cittadino. 9. Dico anche che questo spirito viene per li raggi de la stella: per che sapere si vuole che li raggi di ciascuno cielo sono la via per la quale discende la loro vertude in queste cose di qua giù. E però che li raggi non sono altro che uno lume che viene dal principio de la luce per l'aere infino a la cosa illuminata, e luce non sia se non ne la parte de la stella, però che l'altro cielo è diafano, cioè transparente, non dico che vegna questo spirito, cioè questo pensiero, dal loro cielo in tutto, ma da la loro stella. 10. La quale per la nobilità de li suoi movitori è di tanta vertute, che ne le nostre anime e ne le altre nostre cose ha grandissima podestade, non ostante che essa ci sia lontana, qual volta più c'è presso, cento sessanta sette volte tanto quanto è, e più, al mezzo de la terra, che ci ha di spazio tremilia dugento cinquanta miglia. E questa è la litterale esposizione de la prima parte de la canzone.

CAPITOLO VII [VII]

1. Inteso può essere sofficientemente, per le prenarrate parole, de la litterale sentenza de la prima parte; per che a la seconda è da intendere, ne la quale si manifesta quello che dentro io sentia de la battaglia. 2. E questa parte ha due divisioni: che in prima, cioè nel primo verso, narro la qualitade di queste diversitadi secondo la loro radice, ch'erano dentro a me; poi narro quello che dicea l'una e l'altra diversitade, e però, prima, quello che dicea la parte che perdea, cioè nel verso ch'è lo secondo di questa parte e lo terzo de la canzone. 3. Ad evidenza dunque de la sentenza de la prima divisione, è da sapere che le cose deono essere denominate da l'ultima nobilitade de la loro forma; sì come l'uomo da la ragione, e non dal senso nè d'altro che sia meno nobile. Onde, quando si dice l'uomo vivere, si dee intendere l'uomo usare la ragione, che è sua speziale vita e atto de la sua più nobile parte. 4. E però chi da la ragione si parte, e usa pur la parte sensitiva, non vive uomo, ma vive bestia; sì come dice quello eccellentissimo Boezio: «Asino vive». Dirittamente dico, però che lo pensiero è propio atto de la ragione, perchè le bestie non pensano, che non l'hanno: e non dico pur de le minori bestie, ma di quelle che hanno apparenza umana e spirito di pecora o d'altra bestia abominevole. 5. Dico adunque che vita del mio core, cioè del mio dentro, suole essere un pensiero soave ('soave' è tanto quanto 'suaso', cioè abbellito, dolce, piacente e dilettoso), questo pensiero, che se ne gìa spesse volte a' piedi del sire di costoro a cu' io parlo, ch'è Iddio: ciò è a dire, che io pensando contemplava lo regno de' beati. 6. E dico la final cagione incontanente per che là su io saliva pensando, quando dico: Ove una donna gloriar vedia; a dare a intendere ch'è perchè io era certo, e sono, per sua graziosa revelazione, che ella era in cielo. Onde io pensando spesse volte come possibile m'era, me n'andava quasi rapito. 7. Poi sussequentemente dico l'effetto di questo pensiero, a dare a intendere la sua dolcezza, la quale era tanta che mi facea disioso de la morte, per andare là dov'elli gìa, e ciò dico quivi: Di cui parlava me sì dolcemente, Che l'anima dicea: Io men vo' gire. E questa è la radice de l'una de le diversitadi ch'era in me. 8. Ed è da sapere, che qui si dice 'pensiero' e non 'anima', di quello che salia a vedere quella beata, perchè era spezial pensiero a quello atto. L'anima s'intende, come detto è nel precedente capitolo, per lo generale pensiero col consentimento. 9. Poi quando dico: Or apparisce chi lo fa fuggire, narro la radice de l'altra diversitade, dicendo, sì come questo pensiero di sopra suol esser vita di me, così un altro apparisce che fa quello cessare. E dico 'fuggire', per mostrare quello essere contrario, chè naturalmente l'uno contrario fugge l'altro, e quello che fugge mostra per difetto di vertù di fuggire. 10. E dico

che questo pensiero, che di nuovo apparisce, è poderoso in prender me e in vincere l’anima tutta, dicendo che esso segnoreggia sì che ‘l cuore, cioè lo mio dentro, triema, e lo mio di fuori lo dimostra in alcuna nuova sembianza. 11. Sussequentemente mostro la potenza di questo pensiero nuovo per suo effetto, dicendo che esso mi fa mirare una donna, e dicemi parole di lusinghe, cioè ragiona dinanzi a li occhi del mio intelligibile affetto per meglio inducermi, promettendomi che la vista de li occhi suoi è sua salute. 12. E a meglio fare ciò credere a l’anima esperta, dice che non è da guardare ne li occhi di questa donna per persona che tema angoscia di sospiri. Ed è bel modo rettorico, quando di fuori pare la cosa disabbellirsi, e dentro veramente s’abbellisce. Più non potea questo novo pensero d’amore inducere la mia mente a consentire, che [‘n] ragionare de la vertù de li occhi di costei profondamente.

CAPITOLO VIII [IX]

1. Ora ch'è mostrato come e perchè nasce amore, e la diversitade che mi combattea, procedere si conviene ad aprire la sentenza di quella parte ne la quale contendono in me diversi pensamenti. 2. Dico che prima si conviene dire de la parte de l'anima, cioè de l'antico pensiero, e poi de l'altro, per questa ragione, che sempre quello che massimamente dire intende lo dicitore sì dee riservare di dietro; però che quello che ultimamente si dice, più rimane ne l'animo de lo uditore. 3. Onde con ciò sia cosa che io intenda più a dire e a ragionare quello che l'opera di costoro a cu' io parlo fa, che quello che essa disfà, ragionevole fu prima dire e ragionare la condizione de la parte che si corrompea, e poi quella de l'altra che si generava. 4. Veramente qui nasce un dubbio, lo qual non è da trapassare sanza dichiarare. Potrebbe dire alcuno: 'Con ciò sia cosa che amore sia effetto di queste intelligenze a cu' io parlo, e quello di prima fosse amore così come questo di poi, perchè la loro vertù corrompe l'uno e l'altro genera? con ciò sia cosa che innanzi dovrebbe quello salvare, per la ragione che ciascuna cagione ama lo suo effetto e, amando quello, salva quell'altro.' 5. A questa questione si può leggermente rispondere che lo effetto di costoro è amore, com'è detto; e però che salvare nol possono se non in quelli subietti che sono sottoposti a la loro circulazione, esso transmutano di quella parte che è fuori di loro podestade in quella che v'è dentro, cioè de l'anima partita d'esta vita in quella ch'è in essa. 6. Sì come la natura umana transmuta, ne la forma umana, la sua conservazione di padre in figlio, perchè non può in esso padre perpetualmente [ta]l suo effetto conservare. Dico 'effetto', in quanto l'anima col corpo, congiunti, sono effetto di quella; chè [l'anima, poi che] è partita, perpetualmente dura in natura più che umana. E così è soluta la questione. 7. Ma però che de la immortalità de l'anima è qui toccato, farò una digressione, ragionando di quella; perchè, di quella ragionando, sarà bello terminare lo parlare di quella viva Beatrice beata, de la quale più parlare in questo libro non intendo per proponimento. 8. Dico che intra tutte le bestialitadi quella è stoltissima, vilissima e dannosissima, chi crede dopo questa vita non essere altra vita; però che, se noi rivolgiamo tutte le scritture, sì de' filosofi come de li altri savi scrittori, tutti concordano in questo, che in noi sia parte alcuna perpetuale. 9. E questo massimamente par volere Aristotile in quello de l'Anima; questo par volere massimamente ciascuno Stoico; questo par volere Tullio, spezialmente in quello libello de la Vegliezza; questo par volere ciascuno poeta che secondo la fede de' Gentili hanno parlato; questo vuole ciascuna legge, Giudei, Saracini, Tartari, e qualunque altri vivono secondo alcuna ragione. 10. Che se tutti fossero ingannati, seguiterebbe una

impossibilitade, che pure a ritraere sarebbe orribile. Ciascuno è certo che la natura umana è perfettissima di tutte l'altre nature di qua giù; e questo nullo niega, e Aristotile l'afferma quando dice nel duodecimo de li Animali che l'uomo è perfettissimo di tutti li animali. 11. Onde con ciò sia cosa che molti che vivono interamente siano mortali, sì come animali bruti, e siano sanza questa speranza tutti mentre che vivono, cioè d'altra vita; se la nostra speranza fosse vana, maggiore sarebbe lo nostro difetto che di nullo altro animale, con ciò sia cosa che molti già sono stati che hanno data questa vita per quella: e così seguiterebbe che lo perfettissimo animale, cioè l'uomo, fosse imperfettissimo - ch'è impossibile -, e che quella parte, cioè la ragione, che è sua perfezione maggiore, fosse a lui cagione di maggiore difetto - che del tutto diverso pare a dire -. 12. Ancora, seguiterebbe che la natura contra se medesima questa speranza ne la mente umana posta avesse, poi che detto è che molti a la morte del corpo sono corsi, per vivere ne l'altra vita; e questo è anche impossibile. 13. Ancora, vedemo continua esperienza de la nostra immortalitade ne le divinazioni de' nostri sogni, le quali essere non potrebbono se in noi alcuna parte immortale non fosse; con ciò sia cosa che immortale convegna essere lo rivelante, [o corporeo] o incorporeo che sia, se bene si pensa sottilmente - e dico 'corporeo o incorporeo' per le diverse oppinioni ch'io truovo di ciò -, e quello ch'è mosso o vero informato da informatore immediato debba proporzione avere a lo informatore, e da lo mortale a lo immortale nulla sia proporzione. 14. Ancora, n'accerta la dottrina veracissima di Cristo, la quale è via, verità e luce: via, perchè per essa sanza impedimento andiamo a la felicitade di quella immortalitade; verità, perchè non soffera alcuno errore; luce, perchè allumina noi ne la tenebra de la ignoranza mondana. 15. Questa dottrina dico che ne fa certi sopra tutte altre ragioni, però che quello la n'hae data che la nostra immortalitade vede e misura. La quale noi non potemo perfettamente vedere mentre che 'l nostro immortale col mortale è mischiato; ma vedemolo per fede perfettamente, e per ragione lo vedemo con ombra d'oscuritade, la quale incontra per mistura del mortale con l'immortale. 16. E ciò dee essere potentissimo argomento che in noi l'uno e l'altro sia; e io così credo, così affermo e così certo sono ad altra vita migliore dopo questa passare, là dove quella gloriosa donna vive de la quale fu l'anima mia innamorata quando contendea, come nel seguente capitolo si ragionerà.

CAPITOLO IX [X]

1. Tornando al proposito, dico che in questo verso che comincia: Trova contraro tal che lo distrugge, intendo manifestare quello che dentro a me l'anima mia ragionava, cioè l'antico pensiero contra lo nuovo. E prima brievemente manifesto la cagione del suo lamentevole parlare, quando dico: Trova contraro tal che lo distrugge L'umil pensero, che parlar mi sole D'un'angela che 'n cielo è coronata. Questo è quello speziale pensiero, del quale detto è di sopra che solea esser vita de lo cor dolente. 2. Poi quando dico: L'anima piange, sì ancor len dole, manifesto l'anima mia essere ancora da la sua parte, e con tristizia parlare: e dico che dice parole lamentandosi, quasi come si maravigliasse de la subita transmutazione, dicendo: Oh lassa a me, come si fugge Questo piatoso che m'ha consolata! Ben può dire 'consolata', chè ne la sua grande perdita questo pensiero, che in cielo salia, le avea data molta consolazione. 3. Poi appresso, ad iscusa di sè dico che si volge tutto lo mio pensiero, cioè l'anima, de la quale dico questa affannata, e parla contra gli occhi; e questo si manifesta quivi: De li occhi miei dice questa affannata. E dico ch'ella dice di loro e contra loro tre cose. 4. La prima è che bestemmia l'ora che questa donna li vide. E qui si vuol sapere che avvegna che più cose ne l'occhio a un'ora possano venire, veramente quella che viene per retta linea ne la punta de la pupilla, quella veramente si vede, e ne la imaginativa si suggella solamente. 5. E questo è però che 'l nervo per lo quale corre lo spirito visivo, è diritto a quella parte; e però veramente l'occhio l'altro occhio non può guardare, sì che esso non sia veduto da lui; chè, sì come quello che mira riceve la forma ne la pupilla per retta linea, così per quella medesima linea la sua forma se ne va in quello ch'ello mira: e molte volte, nel dirizzare di questa linea, discocca l'arco di colui al quale ogni arme è leggiere. Però quando dico che tal donna li vide, è tanto a dire quanto che li occhi suoi e li miei si guardaro. 6. La seconda cosa che dice, si è che riprende la sua disobedienza, quando dice: E perchè non credeano a me di lei? Poi procede a la terza cosa, e dice che non dee sè riprendere di provvedimento, ma loro di non ubbidire; però che dice che alcuna volta, di questa donna ragionando, dicesse: Ne li occhi di costei doverebbe esser virtù sopra me, se ella avesse aperta la via di venire; e questo dice quivi: Io dicea: Ben ne li occhi di costei. 7. E ben si dee credere che l'anima mia conoscea la sua disposizione atta a ricevere l'atto di questa donna, e però ne temea; chè l'atto de l'agente si prende nel disposto paziente, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Anima. E però se la cera avesse spirito da temere, più temerebbe di venire a lo raggio del sole che non farebbe la pietra, però che la sua disposizione riceve quello per più forte operazione. 8.

Ultimamente manifesta l’anima nel suo parlare la presunzione loro pericolosa essere stata, quando dice: E non mi valse ch’io ne fossi accorta Che non mirasser tal, ch’io ne son morta. Non là mirasser, dice, colui di cui prima detto avea: Colui che le mie pari ancide. E così termina le sue parole, a le quali risponde lo novo pensiero, sì come nel seguente capitolo si dichiarerà.

CAPITOLO X [XI]

1. Dimostrata è la sentenza di quella parte ne la qual parla l'anima, cioè l'antico pensiero che si corruppe. Ora seguentemente si dee mostrare la sentenza de la parte ne la qual parla lo pensiero nuovo avverso; e questa parte si contiene tutta nel verso che comincia: Tu non se' morta. 2. La qual parte, a bene intendere, si vuole in due partire: che ne la prima [lo pensiero avverso riprende l'anima di viltade; e appresso comanda quello che far dee quest'anima ripresa, cioè ne la seconda] parte, che comincia: Mira quant'ell'è pietosa. 3. Dice adunque, continuandosi a l'ultime sue parole: Non è vero che tu sie morta; ma la cagione per che morta ti pare essere, si è uno smarrimento nel quale se' caduta vilmente per questa donna che è apparita: - e qui è da notare che, sì come dice Boezio ne la sua Consolazione, «ogni subito movimento di cose non avviene sanza alcuno discorrimento d'animo» -; e questo vuol dire lo riprendere di questo pensiero. 4. Lo quale si chiama 'spiritello d'amore' a dare a intendere che lo consentimento mio piegava inver di lui; e così si può questo intendere maggiormente, e conoscere la sua vittoria, quando dice già 'anima nostra', facendosi familiare di quella. 5. Poi, com'è detto, comanda quello che far dee quest'anima ripresa per venir lei a sè, e lei dice: Mira quant'ell'è pietosa e umile; chè sono proprio rimedio a la temenza, de la qual parea l'anima passionata, due cose, e sono queste che, massimamente congiunte, fanno de la persona bene sperare, e massimamente la pietade, la quale fa risplendere ogni altra bontade col lume suo. Per che Virgilio, d'Enea parlando, in sua maggiore loda pietoso lo chiama. 6. E non è pietade quella che crede la volgar gente, cioè dolersi de l'altrui male, anzi è questo uno suo speziale effetto, che si chiama misericordia ed è passione; ma pietade non è passione, anzi è una nobile disposizione d'animo, apparecchiata di ricevere amore, misericordia e altre caritative passioni. 7. Poi dice: Mira anco quanto è saggia e cortese ne la sua grandezza. Or dice tre cose, le quali, secondo quelle che per noi acquistar si possono, massimamente fanno la persona piacente. Dice 'saggia': or che è più bello in donna che savere? Dice 'cortese': nulla cosa sta più bene in donna che cortesia. E non siano li miseri volgari anche di questo vocabulo ingannati, che credono che cortesia non sia altro che larghezza; e larghezza è una speziale, e non generale, cortesia! 8. Cortesia e onestade è tutt'uno: e però che ne le corti anticamente le vertudi e li belli costumi s'usavano, sì come oggi s'usa lo contrario, si tolse quello vocabulo da le corti, e fu tanto a dire cortesia quanto uso di corte. Lo qual vocabulo se oggi si togliesse da le corti, massimamente d'Italia, non sarebbe altro a dire che turpezza. 9. Dice ne la sua grandezza. La grandezza temporale, de la quale qui

s’intende, massimamente sta bene accompagnata con le due predette bontadi, però ch’ell’apre lume che mostra lo bene e l’altro de la persona chiaramente. E quanto savere e quanto abito virtuoso non si pare per questo lume non avere! e quanta matterìa e quanti vizii si discernono per aver questo lume! 10. Meglio sarebbe a li miseri grandi, matti, stolti e viziosi, essere in basso stato, chè nè in mondo nè dopo la vita sarebbero tanto infamati. Veramente per costoro dice Salomone ne lo Ecclesiaste: «E un’altra infermitade pessima vidi sotto lo sole, cioè ricchezze conservate in male del loro signore». 11. Poi sussequentemente impone a lei, cioè a l’anima mia, che chiami omai costei sua donna, promettendo a lei che di ciò assai si contenterà, quando ella sarà de le sue adornezze accorta; e questo dice quivi: Chè se tu non t’inganni, tu vedrai. Nè altro dice infino a la fine di questo verso. E qui termina la sentenza litterale di tutto quello che in questa canzone dico, parlando a quelle intelligenze celestiali.

CAPITOLO XI [XII]

1. Ultimamente, secondo che di sopra disse la littera di questo commento quando partio le parti principali di questa canzone, io mi rivolgo con la faccia del mio sermone a la canzone medesima, e a quella parlo. 2. E acciò che questa parte più pienamente sia intesa, dico che generalmente si chiama in ciascuna canzone ‘tornata’, però che li dicitori che prima usaro di farla, fenno quella perchè, cantata la canzone, con certa parte del canto ad essa si ritornasse. 3. Ma io rade volte a quella intenzione la feci, e, acciò che altri se n’accorgesse, rade volte la puosi con l’ordine de la canzone, quanto è a lo numero che a la nota è necessario; ma fecila quando alcuna cosa in adornamento de la canzone era mestiero a dire, fuori de la sua sentenza, sì come in questa e ne l’altre veder si potrà. 4. E però dico al presente che la bontade e la bellezza di ciascuno sermone sono intra loro partite e diverse; chè la bontade è ne la sentenza, e la bellezza è ne l’ornamento de le parole; e l’una e l’altra è con diletto, avvenga che la bontade sia massimamente dilettosa. 5. Onde con ciò sia cosa che la bontade di questa canzone fosse malagevole a sentire per le diverse persone che in essa s’inducono a parlare, dove si richeggiono molte distinzioni, e la bellezza fosse agevole a vedere, parvemi mestiero a la canzone che per li altri si ponesse più mente a la bellezza che a la bontade. E questo è quello che dico in questa parte. 6. Ma però che molte fiate avviene che l’ammonire pare presuntuoso, per certe condizioni suole lo rettorico indirettamente parlare altrui, dirizzando le sue parole non a quello per cui dice, ma verso un altro. E questo modo si tiene qui veramente; chè a la canzone vanno le parole, e a li uomini la ‘ntenzione. 7. Dico adunque: Io credo, canzone, che radi sono, cioè pochi, quelli che intendano te bene. E dico la cagione, la quale è doppia. Prima: però che faticosa parli - ‘faticosa’ dico per la cagione che detta è -; poi: però che forte parli - ‘forte’ dico quanto a la novitate de la sentenza.- 8. Ora appresso ammonisco lei e dico: Se per avventura incontra che tu vadi là dove persone siano che dubitare ti paiano ne la tua ragione, non ti smarrire, ma dì loro: Poi che non vedete la mia bontade, ponete mente almeno la mia bellezza. 9. Che non voglio in ciò altro dire, secondo ch’è detto di sopra, se non: O uomini, che vedere non potete la sentenza di questa canzone, non la rifiutate però; ma ponete mente la sua bellezza, ch’è grande sì per construzione, la quale si pertiene a li gramatici, sì per l’ordine del sermone, che si pertiene a li rettorici, sì per lo numero de le sue parti, che si pertiene a li musici. Le quali cose in essa si possono belle vedere, per chi ben guarda. 10. E questa è tutta la litterale sentenza de la prima canzone, che è per prima vivanda intesa innanzi.

CAPITOLO XII [XIII]

1. Poi che la litterale sentenza è sufficientemente dimostrata, è da procedere a la esposizione allegorica e vera. E però, principiando ancora da capo, dico che, come per me fu perduto lo primo diletto de la mia anima, de la quale fatta è menzione di sopra, io rimasi di tanta tristizia punto, che conforto non mi valeva alcuno. 2. Tuttavia, dopo alquanto tempo, la mia mente, che si argomentava di sanare, provide, poi che nè 'l mio nè l'altrui consolare valea, ritornare al modo che alcuno sconsolato avea tenuto a consolarsi; e misimi a leggere quello non conosciuto da molti libro di Boezio, nel quale, cattivo e discacciato, consolato s'avea. 3. E udendo ancora che Tullio scritto avea un altro libro, nel quale, trattando de l'Amistade, avea toccate parole de la consolazione di Lelio, uomo eccellentissimo, ne la morte di Scipione amico suo, misimi a leggere quello. 4. E avvegna che duro mi fosse ne la prima entrare ne la loro sentenza, finalmente v'entrai tanto entro, quanto l'arte di gramatica ch'io avea e un poco di mio ingegno potea fare; per lo quale ingegno molte cose, quasi come sognando, già vedea, sì come ne la Vita Nuova si può vedere. 5. E sì come essere suole che l'uomo va cercando argento e fuori de la 'ntenzione truova oro, lo quale occulta cagione presenta, non forse sanza divino imperio; io, che cercava di consolarme, trovai non solamente a le mie lagrime rimedio, ma vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri: li quali considerando, giudicava bene che la filosofia, che era donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di questi libri, fosse somma cosa. 6. E imaginava lei fatta come una donna gentile, e non la poteva imaginare in atto alcuno se non misericordioso; per che sì volentieri lo senso di vero la mirava, che appena lo potea volgere da quella. 7. E da questo imaginare cominciai ad andare là dov'ella si dimostrava veracemente, cioè ne le scuole de li religiosi e a le disputazioni de li filosofanti. Sì che in picciol tempo, forse di trenta mesi, cominciai tanto a sentire de la sua dolcezza, che lo suo amore cacciava e distruggeva ogni altro pensiero. 8. Per che io, sentendomi levare dal pensiero del primo amore a la virtù di questo, quasi maravigliandomi apersi la bocca nel parlare de la proposta canzone, mostrando la mia condizione sotto figura d'altre cose: però che de la donna di cu' io m'innamorava non era degna rima di volgare alcuna palesemente po[e]tare; nè li uditori erano tanto bene disposti, che avessero sì leggiere le [non] fittizie parole apprese; nè sarebbe data loro fede a la sentenza vera, come a la fittizia, però che di vero si credea del tutto che disposto fosse a quello amore, che non si credeva di questo. 9. Cominciai dunque a dire: Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete. E perchè, sì come detto è, questa donna fu figlia di Dio, regina di tutto, nobilissima e bellissima Filosofia, è da vedere

chi furono questi movitori, e questo terzo cielo. E prima del cielo, secondo l’ordine trapassato. 10. E non è qui mestiere di procedere dividendo, e a littera esponendo; chè, volta la parola fittizia di quello ch’ella suona in quello ch’ella ‘ntende, per la passata sposizione questa sentenza fia sufficientemente palese.

CAPITOLO XIII [XIV]

1. A vedere quello che per lo terzo cielo s'intende, prima si vuol vedere che per questo solo vocabulo 'cielo' io voglio dire; e poi si vedrà come e perchè questo terzo cielo ci fu mestiere. 2. Dico che per cielo intendo la scienza e per cieli le scienze, per tre similitudini che li cieli hanno con le scienze massimamente; e per l'ordine e numero in che paiono convenire, sì come trattando quello vocabulo, cioè 'terzo', si vedrà. 3. La prima similitudine si è la revoluzione de l'uno e de l'altro intorno a uno suo immobile. Chè ciascuno cielo mobile si volge intorno al suo centro, lo quale, quanto per lo suo movimento, non si muove; e così ciascuna scienza si muove intorno al suo subietto, lo quale essa non muove, però che nulla scienza dimostra lo proprio subietto, ma suppone quello. 4. La seconda similitudine si è lo illuminare de l'uno e de l'altro; chè ciascun cielo illumina le cose visibili, e così ciascuna scienza illumina le intelligibili. 5. E la terza similitudine si è lo inducere perfezione ne le disposte cose. De la quale induzione, quanto a la prima perfezione, cioè de la generazione sustanziale, tutti li filosofi concordano che li cieli siano cagione, avvegna che diversamente questo pongano: quali da li motori, sì come Plato, Avicenna e Algazel; quali da esse stelle, spezialmente l'anime umane, sì come Socrate, e anche Plato e Dionisio Academico; e quali da vertude celestiale che è nel calore naturale del seme, sì come Aristotile e li altri Peripatetici. 6. Così de la induzione de la perfezione seconda le scienze sono cagione in noi; per l'abito de le quali potemo la veritade speculare, che è ultima perfezione nostra, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel sesto de l'Etica, quando dice che 'l vero è lo bene de lo intelletto. Per queste, con altre similitudini molte, si può la scienza 'cielo' chiamare. Ora perchè 'terzo' cielo si dica è da vedere. 7. A che è mestiere fare considerazione sovra una comparazione che è ne l'ordine de li cieli a quello de le scienze. Sì come adunque di sopra è narrato, li sette cieli primi a noi sono quelli de li pianeti; poi sono due cieli sopra questi, mobili, e uno sopra tutti, quieto. 8. A li sette primi rispondono le sette scienze del Trivio e del Quadruvio, cioè Gramatica, Dialettica, Rettorica, Arismetrica, Musica, Geometria e Astrologia. A l'ottava spera, cioè a la stellata, risponde la scienza naturale, che Fisica si chiama, e la prima scienza, che si chiama Metafisica; a la nona spera risponde la scienza morale; ed al cielo quieto risponde la scienza divina, che è Teologia appellata. E ragione per che ciò sia, brievemente è da vedere. 9. Dico che 'l cielo de la Luna con la Gramatica si somiglia [per due proprietadi], per che ad esso si può comparare. Che se la Luna si guarda bene, due cose si veggiono in essa proprie, che non si veggiono ne l'altre stelle: l'una si è l'ombra che è in essa, la quale non

è altro che raritade del suo corpo, a la quale non possono terminare li raggi del sole e ripercuotersi così come ne l'altre parti; l'altra sì è la variazione de la sua luminositade, che ora luce da uno lato, e ora luce da un altro, secondo che lo sole la vede. 10. E queste due proprietadi hae la Gramatica: chè, per la sua infinitade, li raggi de la ragione in essa non si terminano, in parte spezialmente de li vocabuli; e luce or di qua or di là in tanto quanto certi vocabuli, certe declinazioni, certe construzioni sono in uso che già non furono, e molte già furono che ancor saranno: sì come dice Orazio nel principio de la Poetria quando dice: «Molti vocabuli rinasceranno che già caddero». 11. E lo cielo di Mercurio si può comparare a la Dialettica per due proprietadi: che Mercurio è la più picciola stella del cielo, chè la quantitade del suo diametro non è più che di dugento trentadue miglia, secondo che pone Alfagrano, che dice quello essere de le ventotto parti una del diametro de la terra, lo quale è sei milia cinquecento miglia: l'altra proprietade si è che più va velata de li raggi del Sole che null'altra stella. 12. E queste due proprietadi sono ne la Dialettica: chè la Dialettica è minore in suo corpo che null'altra scienza, chè perfettamente è compilata e terminata in quello tanto testo che ne l'Arte vecchia e ne la Nuova si truova; e va più velata che nulla scienza, in quanto procede con più sofistici e probabili argomenti più che altra. 13. E lo cielo di Venere si può comparare a la Rettorica per due proprietadi: l'una sì è la chiarezza del suo aspetto, che è soavissima a vedere più che altra stella; l'altra sì è la sua apparenza, or da mane or da sera. 14. E queste due proprietadi sono ne la Rettorica: chè la Rettorica è soavissima di tutte le altre scienze, però che a ciò principalmente intende; e appare da mane, quando dinanzi al viso de l'uditore lo rettorico parla, appare da sera, cioè retro, quando da lettera, per la parte remota, si parla per lo rettorico. 15. E lo cielo del Sole si può comparare a l'Arismetrica per due proprietadi: l'una si è che del suo lume tutte l'altre stelle s'informano; l'altra si è che l'occhio nol può mirare. 16. E queste due proprietadi sono ne l'Arismetrica: chè del suo lume tutte s'illuminano le scienze, però che li loro subietti sono tutti sotto alcuno numero considerati, e ne le considerazioni di quelli sempre con numero si procede. 17. Sì come ne la scienza naturale è subietto lo corpo mobile, lo quale corpo mobile ha in sè ragione di continuitade, e questa ha in sè ragione di numero infinito; e la sua considerazione principalissima è considerare li principii de le cose naturali, li quali sono tre, cioè materia, privazione e forma, ne li quali si vede questo numero. 18. Non solamente in tutti insieme, ma ancora in ciascuno è numero, chi ben considera sottilmente; per che Pittagora, secondo che dice Aristotile nel primo de la Fisica, poneva li principii de le cose naturali lo pari e lo dispari, considerando tutte le cose esser numero. 19. L'altra proprietade del Sole ancor si vede nel numero, del quale è l'Arismetrica: che l'occhio de lo 'ntelletto nol può

mirare; però che ‘l numero, quant’è in sè considerato, è infinito, e questo non potemo noi intendere. 20. E lo cielo di Marte si può comparare a la Musica per due proprietadi: l’una si è la sua più bella relazione, chè, annumerando li cieli mobili, da qualunque si comincia o da l’infimo o dal sommo, esso cielo di Marte è lo quinto, esso è lo mezzo di tutti, cioè de li primi, de li secondi, de li terzi e de li quarti. 21. L’altra si è che esso Marte, [sì come dice Tolomeo nel Quadripartito], dissecca e arde le cose, perchè lo suo calore è simile a quello del fuoco; e questo è quello per che esso pare affocato di colore, quando più e quando meno, secondo la spessezza e raritade de li vapori che ‘l seguono: li quali per lor medesimi molte volte s’accendono, sì come nel primo de la Metaura è diterminato. 22. E però dice Albumasar che l’accendimento di questi vapori significa morte di regi e transmutamento di regni; però che sono effetti de la segnoria di Marte. E Seneca dice però, che ne la morte d’Augusto imperadore vide in alto una palla di fuoco; e in Fiorenza, nel principio de la sua destruzione, veduta fu ne l’aere, in figura d’una croce, grande quantità di questi vapori seguaci de la stella di Marte. 23. E queste due proprietadi sono ne la Musica, la quale è tutta relativa, sì come si vede ne le parole armonizzate e ne li canti, de’ quali tanto più dolce armonia resulta, quanto più la relazione è bella: la quale in essa scienza massimamente è bella, perchè massimamente in essa s’intende. 24. Ancora, la Musica trae a sè li spiriti umani, che quasi sono principalmente vapori del cuore, sì che quasi cessano da ogni operazione: sì è l’anima intera, quando l’ode, e la virtù di tutti quasi corre a lo spirito sensibile che riceve lo suono. 25. E lo cielo di Giove si può comparare a la Geometria per due proprietadi: l’una sì è che muove tra due cieli repugnanti a la sua buona temperanza, sì come quello di Marte e quello di Saturno; onde Tolomeo dice, ne lo allegato libro, che Giove è stella di temperata complessione, in mezzo de la freddura di Saturno e de lo calore di Marte; l’altra sì è che intra tutte le stelle bianca si mostra, quasi argentata. E queste cose sono ne la scienza de la Geometria. 26. La Geometria si muove intra due repugnanti a essa, sì come ‘l punto e lo cerchio - e dico ‘cerchio’ largamente ogni ritondo, o corpo o superficie -; chè, sì come dice Euclide, lo punto è principio di quella, e, secondo che dice, lo cerchio è perfettissima figura in quella, che conviene però avere ragione di fine. 27. Sì che tra ‘l punto e lo cerchio sì come tra principio e fine si muove la Geometria, e questi due a la sua certezza repugnano; che lo punto per la sua indivisibilità è immensurabile, e lo cerchio per lo suo arco è impossibile a quadrare perfettamente, e però è impossibile a misurare a punto. E ancora la Geometria è bianchissima, in quanto è sanza macula d’errore e certissima per sè e per la sua ancella, che si chiama Perspettiva. 28. E lo cielo di Saturno hae due proprietadi per le quali si può comparare a l’Astrologia: l’una sì è la tardezza del suo

movimento per li dodici segni, chè ventinove anni e più, secondo le scritture de li astrologi, vuole di tempo lo suo cerchio; l'altra sì è che sopra tutti li altri pianeti esso è alto. 29. E queste due proprietadi sono ne l'Astrologia: chè nel suo cerchio compiere, cioè ne lo apprendimento di quella, volge grandissimo spazio di tempo, sì per le sue [dimostrazioni], che sono più che d'alcuna de le sopra dette scienze, sì per la esperienza che a ben giudicare in essa si conviene. 30. E ancora è altissima di tutte le altre, però che, sì come dice Aristotile nel cominciamento de l'Anima, la scienza è alta di nobilitade per la nobilitade del suo subietto e per la sua certezza; e questa più che alcuna de le sopra dette è nobile e alta per nobile e alto subietto, ch'è de lo movimento del cielo; e alta e nobile per la sua certezza, la quale è sanza ogni difetto, sì come quella che da perfettissimo e regolatissimo principio viene. E se difetto in lei si crede per alcuno, non è da la sua parte, ma, sì come dice Tolomeo, è per la negligenza nostra, e a quella si dee imputare.

CAPITOLO XIV [XV]

1. Appresso le comparazioni fatte de li sette primi cieli, è da procedere a li altri, che sono tre, come più volte s'è narrato. Dico che lo Cielo stellato si puote comparare a la Fisica per tre proprietadi, e a la Metafisica per altre tre: ch'ello ci mostra di sè due visibili cose, sì come le molte stelle, e sì come la Galassia, cioè quello bianco cerchio che lo vulgo chiama la Via di Sa' Iacopo; e mostraci l'uno de li poli, e l'altro tiene ascoso; e mostraci uno suo movimento, da oriente ad occidente, e un altro, che fa da occidente ad oriente, quasi ci tiene ascoso. Per che per ordine è da vedere prima la comparazione de la Fisica, e poi quella de la Metafisica. 2. Dico che lo Cielo stellato ci mostra molte stelle: chè secondo che li savi d'Egitto hanno veduto, infino a l'ultima stella che appare loro in meridie, mille ventidue corpora di stelle pongono, di cui io parlo. Ed in questo ha esso grandissima similitudine con la Fisica, se bene si guardano sottilmente questi tre numeri, cioè due e venti e mille. 3. Chè per lo due s'intende lo movimento locale, lo quale è da uno punto ad un altro di necessitade. E per lo venti significa lo movimento de l'alterazione; chè, con ciò sia cosa che, dal diece in su, non si vada se non esso diece alterando con gli altri nove e con se stesso, e la più bella alterazione che esso riceva sia la sua di se medesimo, e la prima che riceve sia venti, ragionevolemente per questo numero lo detto movimento significa. 4. E per lo mille significa lo movimento del crescere; chè in nome, cioè questo 'mille', è lo maggiore numero, e più crescere non si può se non questo multiplicando. E questi tre movimenti soli mostra la Fisica, sì come nel quinto del primo suo libro è provato. 5. E per la Galassia ha questo cielo similitudine grande con la Metafisica. Per che è da sapere che di quella Galassia li filosofi hanno avute diverse oppinioni. Chè li Pittagorici dissero che 'l Sole alcuna fiata errò ne la sua via e, passando per altre parti non convenienti al suo fervore, arse lo luogo per lo quale passò, e rimasevi quella apparenza de l'arsura: e credo che si mossero da la favola di Fetonte, la quale narra Ovidio nel principio del secondo di Metamorfoseos. 6. Altri dissero, sì come fu Anassagora e Democrito, che ciò era lume di sole ripercusso in quella parte, e queste oppinioni con ragioni dimostrative riprovaro. Quello che Aristotile si dicesse non si può bene sapere di ciò, però che la sua sentenza non si truova cotale ne l'una translazione come ne l'altra. 7. E credo che fosse lo errore de li translatori; chè ne la Nuova pare dicere che ciò sia uno ragunamento di vapori sotto le stelle di quella parte, che sempre traggono quelli: e questo non pare avere ragione vera. Ne la Vecchia dice che la Galassia non è altro che moltitudine di stelle fisse in quella parte, tanto picciole che distinguere di qua giù non le potemo, ma di loro apparisce quello

albore, lo quale noi chiamiamo Galassia: e puote essere, chè lo cielo in quella parte è più spesso e però ritiene e ripresenta quello lume. E questa oppinione pare avere, con Aristotile, Avicenna e Tolomeo. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che la Galassia sia uno effetto di quelle stelle le quali non potemo vedere, se non per lo effetto loro intendiamo quelle cose, e la Metafisica tratti de le prime sustanzie, le quali noi non potemo simigliantemente intendere se non per li loro effetti, manifesto è che ‘l Cielo stellato ha grande similitudine con la Metafisica. 9. Ancora: per lo polo che vedemo significa le cose sensibili, de le quali, universalmente pigliandole, tratta la Fisica; e per lo polo che non vedemo significa le cose che sono sanza materia, che non sono sensibili, de le quali tratta la Metafisica: e però ha lo detto cielo grande similitudine con l’una scienza e con l’altra. 10. Ancora: per li due movimenti significa queste due scienze. Chè per lo movimento ne lo quale ogni die si rivolve, e fa nova circulazione di punto a punto, significa le cose naturali corruttibili, che cotidianamente compiono loro via, e la loro materia si muta di forma in forma; e di queste tratta la Fisica. 11. E per lo movimento quasi insensibile che fa da occidente in oriente per uno grado in cento anni, significa le cose incorruttibili, le quali ebbero da Dio cominciamento di creazione e non averanno fine: e di queste tratta la metafisica. 12. Però dico che questo movimento significa quelle, che essa circulazione cominciò e non averebbe fine; chè fine de la circulazione è redire ad uno medesimo punto, al quale non tornerà questo cielo, secondo questo movimento. 13. Chè dal cominciamento del mondo poco più de la sesta parte è volto; e noi siamo già ne l’ultima etade del secolo, e attendemo veracemente la consummazione del celestiale movimento. E così è manifesto che lo Cielo stellato, per molte proprietadi, si può comparare a la Fisica e a la Metafisica. 14. Lo Cielo cristallino, che per Primo Mobile dinanzi è contato, ha comparazione assai manifesta a la Morale Filosofia; chè Morale Filosofia, secondo che dice Tommaso sopra lo secondo de l’Etica, ordina noi a l’altre scienze. 15. Chè, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel quinto de l’Etica, ‘la giustizia legale ordina la scienze ad apprendere, e comanda, perchè non siano abbandonate, quelle essere apprese e ammaestrate’; e così lo detto cielo ordina col suo movimento la cotidiana revoluzione di tutti li altri, per la quale ogni die tutti quelli ricevono [e mandano] qua giù la vertude di tutte le loro parti. 16. Che se la revoluzione di questo non ordinasse ciò, poco di loro vertude qua giù verrebbe o di loro vista. Onde ponemo che possibile fosse questo nono cielo non muovere, la terza parte del cielo [stellato] sarebbe ancora non veduta in ciascuno luogo de la terra; e Saturno sarebbe quattordici anni e mezzo a ciascuno luogo de la terra celato, e Giove sei anni quasi si celerebbe, e Marte uno anno quasi, e lo Sole centottantadue dì e quattordici ore (dico dì, cioè tanto tempo quanto misurano

cotanti dì), e Venere e Mercurio quasi come lo Sole si celerebbe e mosterrebbe, e la Luna per tempo di quattordici dì e mezzo starebbe ascosa ad ogni gente. 17. E da vero non sarebbe qua giù generazione nè vita d'animale o di piante: notte non sarebbe nè die, nè settimana nè mese nè anno, ma tutto l'universo sarebbe disordinato, e lo movimento de li altri sarebbe indarno. 18. E non altrimenti, cessando la Morale Filosofia, l'altre scienze sarebbero celate alcuno tempo, e non sarebbe generazione nè vita di felicitade, e indarno sarebbero scritte e per antico trovate. Per che assai è manifesto, questo cielo [per] sè avere a la Morale Filosofia comparazione. 19. Ancora: lo Cielo empireo per la sua pace simiglia la Divina Scienza, che piena è di tutta pace; la quale non soffera lite alcuna d'oppinioni o di sofistici argomenti, per la eccellentissima certezza del suo subietto, lo quale è Dio. E di questa dice esso a li suoi discepoli: «La pace mia do a voi, la pace mia lascio a voi», dando e lasciando a loro la sua dottrina, che è questa scienza di cu' io parlo. 20. Di costei dice Salomone: «Sessanta sono le regine, e ottanta l'amiche concubine; e de le ancille adolescenti non è numero: una è la colomba mia e la perfetta mia». Tutte scienze chiama regine e drude e ancille; e questa chiama colomba perchè è sanza macula di lite, e questa chiama perfetta perchè perfettamente ne fa il vero vedere nel quale si cheta l'anima nostra. E però, ragionata così la comparazione de li cieli a le scienze, vedere si può che per lo terzo cielo io intendo la Rettorica, la quale al terzo cielo è simigliata, come di sopra pare.

CAPITOLO XV [XVI]

1. Per le ragionate similitudini si può vedere chi sono questi movitori a cu' io parlo, che sono di quello movitori, sì come Boezio e Tullio, li quali con la dolcezza di loro sermone inviarono me, come è detto di sopra, ne lo amore, cioè ne lo studio, di questa donna gentilissima Filosofia, con li raggi de la stella loro, la quale è la scrittura di quella: onde in ciascuna scienza la scrittura è stella piena di luce, la quale quella scienza dimostra. 2. E, manifesto questo, vedere si può la vera sentenza del primo verso de la canzone proposta, per la esposizione fittizia e litterale. E per questa medesima esposizione si può lo secondo verso intendere sufficientemente, infino a quella parte dove dice: Questi mi face una donna guardare. 3. Ove si vuole sapere che questa donna è la Filosofia; la quale veramente è donna piena di dolcezza, ornata d'onestade, mirabile di savere, gloriosa di libertade, sì come nel terzo trattato, dove la sua nobilitade si tratterà, fia manifesto. 4. E là dove dice: Chi veder vuol la salute, Faccia che li occhi d'esta donna miri, li occhi di questa donna sono le sue demonstrazioni, le quali, dritte ne li occhi de lo 'ntelletto, innamorano l'anima, liberata da le con[tra]dizioni. O dolcissimi e ineffabili sembianti, e rubatori subitani de la mente umana, che ne le mostrazioni de li occhi de la Filosofia apparite, quando essa con li suoi drudi ragiona! Veramente in voi è la salute, per la quale si fa beato chi vi guarda, e salvo da la morte de la ignoranza e da li vizii. 5. Ove si dice: Sed e' non teme angoscia di sospiri, qui si vuole intendere 'se elli non teme labore di studio e lite di dubitazioni', le quali dal principio de li sguardi di questa donna multiplicatamente surgono, e poi, continuando la sua luce, caggiono, quasi come nebulette matutine a la faccia del sole; e rimane libero e pieno di certezza lo familiare intelletto, sì come l'aere da li raggi meridiani purgato e illustrato. 6. Lo terzo verso ancora s'intende per la sposizione litterale infino là dove dice: L'anima piange. Qui si vuole bene attendere ad alcuna moralitade, la quale in queste parole si può notare: che non dee l'uomo, per maggiore amico, dimenticare li servigi ricevuti dal minore; ma se pur seguire si conviene l'uno e lasciar l'altro, lo migliore è da seguire, con alcuna onesta lamentanza l'altro abbandonando, ne la quale dà cagione, a quello che segue, di più amore. 7. Poi dove dice: De li occhi miei, non vuole altro dire, se non che forte fu l'ora che la prima demonstrazione di questa donna entrò ne li occhi de lo 'ntelletto mio, la quale fu cagione di questo innamoramento propinquissima. 8. E là dove dice: le mie pari, s'intende l'anime libere de le misere e vili delettazioni e de li vulgari costumi, d'ingegno e di memoria dotate. E dice poi: ancide; e dice poi: son morta; che pare contro a quello che detto è di sopra de la salute di questa donna.

9. E però è da sapere che qui parla l'una de le parti, e là parla l'altra; le quali diversamente litigano, secondo che di sopra è manifesto. Onde non è maraviglia se là dice 'sì', e qui dice 'no', se bene si guarda chi discende e chi sale. 10. Poi nel quarto verso, dove dice: uno spiritel d'amore, s'intende uno pensiero che nasce del mio studio. Onde è da sapere che per amore, in questa allegoria, sempre s'intende esso studio, lo quale è applicazione de l'animo innamorato de la cosa a quella cosa. 11. Poi quando dice: tu vedrai Di sì alti miracoli adornezza, annunzia che per lei si vedranno li adornamenti de li miracoli: e vero dice, chè li adornamenti de le maraviglie è vedere le cagioni di quelle; le quali ella dimostra, sì come nel principio de la Metafisica pare sentire lo Filosofo, dicendo che, per questi adornamenti vedere, cominciaro li uomini ad innamorare di questa donna. E di questo vocabulo, cioè 'maraviglia', nel seguente trattato più pienamente si parlerà. 12. Tutto l'altro che segue poi di questa canzone, sofficientemente è per l'altra esposizione manifesto. E così, in fine di questo secondo trattato, dico e affermo che la donna di cu' io innamorai appresso lo primo amore fu la bellissima e onestissima figlia de lo Imperadore de lo universo, a la quale Pittagora pose nome Filosofia. E qui si termina lo secondo trattato, [che è ordinato a sponere la canzone] che per prima vivanda è messa innanzi.

TRATTATO TERZO

CANZONE SECONDA

Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona
de la mia donna disiosamente,
move cose di lei meco sovente,
che lo ‘ntelletto sovr’esse disvia.
Lo suo parlar sì dolcemente sona,
che l’anima ch’ascolta e che lo sente
dice: «Oh me lassa! ch’io non son possente
di dir quel ch’odo de la donna mia!»
E certo e’ mi conven lasciare in pria,
s’io vo’ trattar di quel ch’odo di lei,
ciò che lo mio intelletto non comprende;
e di quel che s’intende
gran parte, perchè dirlo non savrei.
Però, se le mie rime avran difetto
ch’entreran ne la loda di costei,
di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto
e ‘l parlar nostro, che non ha valore
di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore.

Non vede il sol, che tutto ‘l mondo gira,
cosa tanto gentil, quanto in quell’ora
che luce ne la parte ove dimora
la donna di cui dire Amor mi face.
Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira,
e quella gente che qui s’innamora
ne’ lor pensieri la truovano ancora,
quando Amor fa sentir de la sua pace.
Suo esser tanto a Quei che lel dà piace,
che ‘nfonde sempre in lei la sua vertute
oltre ‘l dimando di nostra natura.
La sua anima pura,
che riceve da lui questa salute,
lo manifesta in quel ch’ella conduce:
chè ‘n sue bellezze son cose vedute
che li occhi di color dov’ella luce
ne mandan messi al cor pien di desiri,

che prendon aire e diventan sospiri.

In lei discende la virtù divina
sì come face in angelo che ‘l vede;
e qual donna gentil questo non crede,
vada con lei e miri li atti sui.
Quivi dov’ella parla si dichina
un spirito da ciel, che reca fede
come l’alto valor ch’ella possiede
è oltre quel che si conviene a nui.
Li atti soavi ch’ella mostra altrui
vanno chiamando Amor ciascuno a prova
in quella voce che lo fa sentire.
Di costei si può dire:
gentile è in donna ciò che in lei si trova,
e bello è tanto quanto lei simiglia.
E puossi dir che ‘l suo aspetto giova
a consentir ciò che par maraviglia;
onde la nostra fede è aiutata:
però fu tal da etterno ordinata.

Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto
che mostran de’ piacer di Paradiso,
dico ne li occhi e nel suo dolce riso,
che le vi reca Amor com’a suo loco.
Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto,
come raggio di sole un frale viso:
e perch’io non lo posso mirar fiso,
mi conven contentar di dirne poco.
Sua bieltà piove fiammelle di foco,
animate d’un spirito gentile
ch’è creatore d’ogni pensier bono;
e rompon come trono
li ‘nnati vizii che fanno altrui vile.
Però qual donna sente sua bieltate
biasmar per non parer queta e umile,
miri costei ch’è essemplo d’umiltate!
Questa è colei ch’umilia ogni perverso:
costei pensò chi mosse l’universo.

Canzone, e’ par che tu parli contraro
al dir d’una sorella che tu hai;
che questa donna che tanto umil fai
ella la chiama fera e disdegnosa.
Tu sai che ‘l ciel sempr’è lucente e chiaro,
e quanto in sè, non si turba già mai;
ma li nostri occhi per cagioni assai
chiaman la stella talor tenebrosa.
Così, quand’ella la chiama orgogliosa,
non considera lei secondo il vero,
ma pur secondo quel ch’a lei parea:
chè l’anima temea,
e teme ancora, sì che mi par fero
quantunqu’io veggio là ‘v’ella mi senta.
Così ti scusa, se ti fa mestero;
e quando poi, a lei ti rappresenta:
dirai: «Madonna, s’ello v’è a grato,
io parlerò di voi in ciascun lato».

CAPITOLO I

1. Così come nel precedente trattato si ragiona, lo mio secondo amore prese cominciamento da la misericordiosa sembianza d'una donna. Lo quale amore poi, trovando la mia disposta vita al suo ardore, a guisa di fuoco, di picciolo in grande fiamma s'accese; sì che non solamente vegghiando, ma dormendo, lume di costei ne la mia testa era guidato. 2. E quanto fosse grande lo desiderio che Amore di vedere costei mi dava, nè dire nè intendere si potrebbe. E non solamente di lei era così disidiroso, ma di tutte quelle persone che alcuna prossimitade avessero a lei, o per familiaritade o per parentela alcuna. 3. Oh quante notti furono, che li occhi de l'altre persone chiusi dormendo si posavano, che li miei ne lo abitaculo del mio amore fisamente miravano! E sì come lo multiplicato incendio pur vuole di fuori mostrarsi, che stare ascoso è impossibile, volontade mi giunse di parlare d'amore, l[a] quale del tutto tenere non potea. 4. E avvegna che poca podestade io potesse avere di mio consiglio, pure in tanto, o per volere d'Amore o per mia prontezza, ad esso m'accostai per più fiate, che io deliberai e vidi che, d'amor parlando, più bello nè più profittabile sermone non era che quello nel quale si commendava la persona che s'amava. 5. E a questo deliberamento tre ragioni m'informaro: de le quali l'una fu lo proprio amore di me medesimo, lo quale è principio di tutti li altri, sì come vede ciascuno. Chè più licito nè più cortese modo di fare a se medesimo altri onore non è, che onorare l'amico. Chè con ciò sia cosa che intra dissimili amistà essere non possa, dovunque amistà si vede similitudine s'intende; e dovunque similitudine s'intende corre comune la loda e lo vituperio. 6. E di questa ragione due grandi ammaestramenti si possono intendere: l'uno sì è di non volere che alcuno vizioso si mostri amico, perchè in ciò si prende oppinione non buona di colui cui amico si fa; l'altro sì è, che nessuno dee l'amico suo biasimare palesemente, però che a se medesimo dà del dito ne l'occhio, se ben si mira la predetta ragione. 7. La seconda ragione fu lo desiderio de la durazione di questa amistade. Onde è da sapere che, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel nono de l'Etica, ne l'amistade de le persone dissimili di stato conviene, a conservazione di quella, una proporzione essere intra loro che la dissimilitudine a similitudine quasi reduca. 8. Sì com'è intra lo signore e lo servo: chè, avvegna che lo servo non possa simile beneficio rendere a lo signore quando da lui è beneficiato, dee però rendere quello che migliore può con tanta sollicitudine di prontezza, che quello che è dissimile per sè si faccia simile per lo mostramento de la buona volontade; la quale manifesta, l'amistade si ferma e si conserva. 9. Per che io, considerando me minore che questa donna, e veggendo me beneficiato da lei, [proposi] di lei

commendare secondo la mia facultade, la quale, se non simile è per sè, almeno la pronta volontade mostra; chè, se più potesse, più farei: e così si fa simile a quella di questa gentil donna. 10. La terza ragione fu uno argomento di provedenza; chè, sì come dice Boezio, «non basta di guardare pur quello che è dinanzi a li occhi», cioè lo presente, e però n'è data la provedenza che riguarda oltre, a quello che può avvenire. 11. Dico che pensai che da molti, di retro da me, forse sarei stato ripreso di levezza d'animo, udendo me essere dal primo amore mutato; per che, a torre via questa riprensione, nullo migliore argomento era che dire quale era quella donna che m'avea mutato. 12. Chè, per la sua eccellenza manifesta, avere si può considerazione de la sua virtude; e per lo 'ntendimento de la sua grandissima virtù si può pensare ogni stabilitade d'animo essere a quella mutabile e però me non giudicare lieve e non stabile. Impresi dunque a lodare questa donna, e se non come si convenisse, almeno innanzi quanto io potesse; e cominciai a dire: Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona. 13. Questa canzone principalmente ha tre parti. La prima è tutto lo primo verso, nel quale proemialmente si parla. La seconda sono tutti e tre li versi seguenti, ne li quali si tratta quello che dire s'intende, cioè la loda di questa gentile; lo primo de li quali comincia: Non vede il sol, che tutto 'l mondo gira. La terza parte è lo quinto e l'ultimo verso, nel quale, dirizzando le parole a la canzone, purgo lei d'alcuna dubitanza. E di queste tre parti per ordine è da ragionare.

CAPITOLO II

1. Faccendomi dunque da la prima parte, che proemio di questa canzone fu ordinata, dico che dividere in tre parti si conviene. Che prima si tocca la ineffabile condizione di questo tema; secondamente si narra la mia insufficienza a questo perfettamente trattare: e comincia questa seconda parte: E certo e' mi convien lasciare in pria; ultimamente mi scuso da insufficienza, ne la quale non si dee porre a me colpa: e questo comincio quando dico: Però, se le mie rime avran difetto. 2. Dice adunque: Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona; dove principalmente è da vedere chi è questo ragionatore, e che è questo loco nel quale dico esso ragionare. 3. Amore, veramente pigliando e sottilmente considerando, non è altro che unimento spirituale de l'anima e de la cosa amata; nel quale unimento di propia sua natura l'anima corre tosto e tardi, secondo che è libera o impedita. 4. E la ragione di questa naturalitade può essere questa. Ciascuna forma sustanziale procede da la sua prima cagione, la quale è Iddio, sì come nel libro Di Cagioni è scritto, e non ricevono diversitade per quella, che è semplicissima, ma per le secondarie cagioni e per la materia in che discende. Onde nel medesimo libro si scrive, trattando de la infusione de la bontà divina: «E fanno[si] diverse le bontadi e li doni per lo concorrimento de la cosa che riceve». 5. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che ciascuno effetto ritegna de la natura de la sua cagione - sì come dice Alpetragio quando afferma che quello che è causato da corpo circulare ne ha in alcuno modo circulare essere -, ciascuna forma ha essere de la divina natura in alcun modo: non che la divina natura sia divisa e comunicata in quelle, ma da quelle è participata per lo modo quasi che la natura del sole è participata ne l'altre stelle. 6. E quanto la forma è più nobile, tanto più di questa natura tiene; onde l'anima umana, che è forma nobilissima di queste che sotto lo cielo sono generate, più riceve de la natura divina che alcun'altra. 7. E però che naturalissimo è in Dio volere essere - però che, sì come ne lo allegato libro si legge, «prima cosa è l'essere, e anzi a quello nulla è» -, l'anima umana essere vuole naturalmente con tutto desiderio; e però che 'l suo essere dipende da Dio e per quello si conserva, naturalmente disia e vuole essere a Dio unita per lo suo essere fortificare. 8. E però che ne le bontadi de la natura [e] de la ragione si mostra la divina, viene che naturalmente l'anima umana con quelle per via spirituale si unisce, tanto più tosto e più forte quanto quelle più appaiono perfette: lo quale apparimento è fatto secondo che la conoscenza de l'anima è chiara o impedita. 9. E questo unire è quello che noi dicemo amore, per lo quale si può conoscere quale è dentro l'anima, veggendo di fuori quelli che ama. Questo amore, cioè l'unimento de la mia anima con questa gentil donna, ne la

quale de la divina luce assai mi si mostrava, è quello ragionatore del quale io dico; poi che da lui continui pensieri nasceano, miranti e esaminanti lo valore di questa donna che spiritualmente fatta era con la mia anima una cosa. 10. Lo loco nel quale dico esso ragionare sì è la mente; ma per dire che sia la mente, non si prende di ciò più intendimento che di prima, e però è da vedere che questa mente propriamente significa. 11. Dico adunque che lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Anima, partendo le potenze di quella, dice che l'anima principalmente hae tre potenze, cioè vivere, sentire e ragionare: e dice anche muovere; ma questa si può col sentire fare una, però che ogni anima che sente, o con tutti i sensi o con alcuno solo, si muove; sì che muovere è una potenza congiunta col sentire. 12. E secondo che esso dice, è manifestissimo che queste potenze sono intra sè per modo che l'una è fondamento de l'altra; e quella che è fondamento puote per sè essere partita, ma l'altra, che si fonda sopra essa, non può da quella essere partita. Onde la potenza vegetativa, per la quale si vive, è fondamento sopra 'l quale si sente, cioè vede, ode, gusta, odora e tocca; e questa vegetativa potenza per sè puote essere anima, sì come vedemo ne le piante tutte. 13. La sensitiva sanza quella essere non puote, e non si truova in alcuna cosa che non viva; e questa sensitiva potenza è fondamento de la intellettiva, cioè de la ragione: e però ne le cose animate mortali la ragionativa potenza sanza la sensitiva non si truova, ma la sensitiva si truova sanza questa, sì come ne le bestie, ne li uccelli, ne' pesci e in ogni animale bruto vedemo. 14. E quella anima che tutte queste potenze comprende, [e] è perfettissima di tutte l'altre, è l'anima umana, la quale con la nobilitade de la potenza ultima, cioè ragione, participa de la divina natura a guisa di sempiterna intelligenzia; però che l'anima è tanto in quella sovrana potenza nobilitata e dinudata da materia, che la divina luce, come in angelo, raggia in quella: e però è l'uomo divino animale da li filosofi chiamato. 15. In questa nobilissima parte de l'anima sono più vertudi, sì come dice lo Filosofo massimamente nel sesto de l'[Etica]; dove dice che in essa è una vertù che si chiama scientifica, e una che si chiama ragionativa, o vero consigliativa: e con quest[e] sono certe vertudi - sì come in quello medesimo luogo Aristotile dice - sì come la vertù inventiva e giudicativa. 16. E tutte queste nobilissime vertudi, e l'altre che sono in quella eccellentissima potenza, sì chiama insieme con questo vocabulo del quale si volea sapere che fosse, cioè mente. Per che è manifesto che per mente s'intende questa ultima e nobilissima parte de l'anima. 17. E che ciò fosse lo 'ntendimento, si vede: chè solamente de l'uomo e de le divine sustanze questa mente si predica, sì come per Boezio si puote apertamente vedere, che prima la predica de li uomini, ove dice a la Filosofia: «Tu e Dio, che ne la mente te de li uomini mise»; poi la predica di Dio, quando dice a Dio: «Tutte le cose produci da lo superno essemplo, tu, bellissimo, bello mondo ne la mente

portante». 18. Nè mai d’animale bruto predicata fue, anzi di molti uomini, che de la parte perfettissima paiono defettivi, non pare potersi nè doversi predicare; e però cotali sono chiamati ne la gramatica ‘amenti’ e ‘dementi’, cioè sanza mente. 19. Onde si puote omai vedere che è mente: che è quella fine e preziosissima parte de l’anima che è deitade. E questo è il luogo dove dico che Amore mi ragiona de la mia donna.

CAPITOLO III

1. Non sanza cagione dico che questo amore ne la mente mia fa la sua operazione; ma ragionevolemente ciò si dice, a dare a intendere quale amore è questo, per lo loco nel quale adopera. 2. Onde è da sapere che ciascuna cosa, come detto è di sopra, per la ragione di sopra mostrata ha ‘l suo speziale amore. Come le corpora simplici hanno amore naturato in sè a lo luogo proprio, e però la terra sempre discende al centro; lo fuoco ha [amore a] la circunferenza di sopra, lungo lo cielo de la luna, e però sempre sale a quello. 3. Le corpora composte prima, sì come sono le minere, hanno amore a lo luogo dove la loro generazione è ordinata, e in quello crescono e acquistano vigore e potenza; onde vedemo la calamita sempre da la parte de la sua generazione ricevere vertù. 4. Le piante, che sono prima animate, hanno amore a certo luogo più manifestamente, secondo che la complessione richiede; e però vedemo certe piante lungo l’acque quasi can[s]arsi, e certe sopra li gioghi de le montagne, e certe ne le piagge e dappiè monti: le quali se si transmutano, o muoiono del tutto o vivono quasi triste, sì come disgiunte dal loro amico. 5. Li animali bruti hanno più manifesto amore non solamente a li luoghi, ma l’uno l’altro vedemo amare. Li uomini hanno loro proprio amore a le perfette e oneste cose. E però che l’uomo, avvegna che una sola sustanza sia tutta [sua] forma, per la sua nobilitade ha in sè natura di tutte queste cose, tutti questi amori puote avere e tutti li ha. 6. Chè per la natura del simplice corpo, che ne lo subietto signoreggia, naturalmente ama l’andare in giuso; e però quando in su muove lo suo corpo, più s’affatica. Per la natura seconda, del corpo misto, ama lo luogo de la sua generazione, e ancora lo tempo; e però ciascuno naturalmente è di più virtuoso corpo ne lo luogo dove è generato e nel tempo de la sua generazione che in altro. 7. Onde si legge ne le storie d’Ercule, e ne l’Ovidio Maggiore e in Lucano e in altri poeti, che combattendo con lo gigante che si chiamava Anteo, tutte volte che lo gigante era stanco, e elli ponea lo suo corpo sopra la terra disteso o per sua volontà o per forza d’Ercule, forza e vigore interamente de la terra in lui resurgea, ne la quale e de la quale era esso generato. 8. Di che accorgendosi Ercule, a la fine prese lui; e stringendo quello e levatolo da la terra, tanto lo tenne sanza lasciarlo a la terra ricongiugnere, che lo vinse per soperchio e uccise. E questa battaglia fu in Africa, secondo le testimonianze de le scritture. 9. E per la natura terza, cioè de le piante, ha l’uomo amore a certo cibo, non in quanto è sensibile, ma in quanto è notribile, e quello cotale cibo fa l’opera di questa natura perfettissima, e l’altro non così, ma falla imperfetta. E però vedemo certo cibo fare li uomini formosi e membruti e bene vivacemente colorati, e certi fare lo contrario di questo. 10. E

per la natura quarta, de li animali, cioè sensitiva, hae l'uomo altro amore, per lo quale ama secondo la sensibile apparenza, sì come bestia; e questo amore ne l'uomo massimamente ha mestiere di rettore per la sua soperchievole operazione, ne lo diletto massimamente del gusto e del tatto. 11. E per la quinta e ultima natura, cioè vera umana o, meglio dicendo, angelica, cioè razionale, ha l'uomo amore a la veritade e a la vertude; e da questo amore nasce la vera e perfetta amistade, de l'onesto tratta, de la quale parla lo Filosofo ne l'ottavo de l'Etica, quando tratta de l'amistade. 12. Onde, acciò che questa natura si chiama mente, come di sopra è mostrato, dissi 'Amore ragionare ne la mente', per dare ad intendere che questo amore era quello che in quella nobilissima natura nasce, cioè di veritade e di vertude, e per ischiudere ogni falsa oppinione da me, per la quale fosse sospicato lo mio amore essere per sensibile dilettazione. Dico poi disiosamente, a dare ad intendere la sua continuanza e lo suo fervore. 13. E dico 'move sovente cose che fanno disviare lo 'ntelletto'. E veramente dico; però che li miei pensieri, di costei ragionando, molte fiate voleano cose conchiudere di lei che io non le potea intendere, e smarrivami, sì che quasi parea di fuori alienato: come chi guarda col viso con[tra] una retta linea, prima vede le cose prossime chiaramente; poi, procedendo, meno le vede chiare; poi, più oltre, dubita; poi, massimamente oltre procedendo, lo viso disgiunto nulla vede. 14. E quest'è l'una ineffabilitade di quello che io per tema ho preso; e consequentemente narro l'altra, quando dico: Lo suo parlare. E dico che li miei pensieri - che sono parlare d'Amore - 'sonan sì dolci', che la mia anima, cioè lo mio affetto, arde di potere ciò con la lingua narrare; e perchè dire nol posso, dico che l'anima se ne lamenta dicendo: lassa! ch'io non son possente. 15. E questa è l'altra ineffabilitade; cioè che la lingua non è di quello che lo 'ntelletto vede compiutamente seguace. E dico l'anima ch'ascolta e che lo sente: 'ascoltare', quanto a le parole, e 'sentire', quanto a la dolcezza del suono.

CAPITOLO IV

1. Quando ragionate sono le due ineffabilitadi di questa matera, conviensi procedere a ragionare le parole che narrano la mia insufficienza. Dico adunque che la mia insufficienza procede doppiamente, sì come doppiamente trascende l'altezza di costei, per lo modo che detto è. 2. Chè a me conviene lasciare per povertà d'intelletto molto di quello che è vero di lei, e che quasi ne la mia mente raggia, la quale come corpo diafano riceve quello, non terminando: e questo dico in quella seguente particula: E certo e' mi conven lasciare in pria. 3. Poi quando dico: E di quel che s'intende, dico che non pur a quello che lo mio intelletto non sostiene, ma eziandio a quello che io intendo sufficiente [non sono], però che la lingua mia non è di tanta facundia che dire potesse ciò che nel pensiero mio se ne ragiona; per che è da vedere che, a rispetto de la veritade, poco fia quello che dirà. E ciò risulta in grande loda di costei, se bene si guarda, ne la quale principalmente s'intende; e quella orazione si può dir bene che vegna da la fabrica del rettorico, ne la quale ciascuna parte pone mano a lo principale intento. 4. Poi quando dice: Però, se le mie rime avran difetto, escusomi da una colpa de la quale non deggio essere colpato, veggendo altri le mie parole essere minori che la dignitade di questa; e dico che se difetto fia ne le mie rime, cioè ne le mie parole che a trattare di costei sono ordinate, di ciò è da biasimare la debilitade de lo 'ntelletto e la cortezza del nostro parlare, lo quale per lo pensiero è vinto, sì che seguire lui non puote a pieno, massimamente là dove lo pensiero nasce da amore, perchè quivi l'anima profondamente più che altrove s'ingegna. 5. Potrebbe dire alcuno: 'tu scusi [e accusi] te insiememente'. Chè argomento di colpa è, non purgamento, in quanto la colpa si dà a lo 'ntelletto e al parlare che è mio; chè, sì come, s'elli è buono, io deggio di ciò essere lodato in quanto così [è, così,] s'elli è defettivo, deggio essere biasimato. A ciò si può brievemente rispondere che non m'accuso, ma iscuso veramente. 6. E però è da sapere, secondo la sentenza del Filosofo nel terzo de l'Etica, che l'uomo è degno di loda e di vituperio solo in quelle cose che sono in sua podestà di fare o di non fare; ma in quelle ne le quali non ha podestà non merita nè vituperio nè loda, però che l'uno e l'altro è da rendere ad altrui, avvegna che le cose siano parte de l'uomo medesimo. 7. Onde noi non dovemo vituperare l'uomo perchè sia del corpo da sua nativitade laido, però che non fu in sua podestà farsi bello; ma dovemo vituperare la mala disposizione de la materia onde esso è fatto, che fu principio del peccato de la natura. E così non dovemo lodare l'uomo per biltade che abbia da sua nativitade ne lo suo corpo, chè non fu ello di ciò fattore, ma dovemo lodare l'artefice, cioè la natura umana, che tanta bellezza produce ne la sua

materia quando impedita da essa non è. 8. E però disse bene lo prete a lo ‘mperadore, che ridea e schernia la laidezza del suo corpo: «Dio è segnore: esso fece noi e non essi noi»; e sono queste parole del Profeta, in uno verso del Saltero scritte nè più nè meno come ne la risposta del prete. E però veggiano li cattivi malnati che pongono lo studio loro in azzimare la loro [persona, e non in adornare la loro] operazione, che dee essere tutta con onestade, che non è altro a fare che ornare l’opera d’altrui e abbandonare la propria. 9. Tornando adunque al proposito, dico che nostro intelletto, per difetto de la vertù da la quale trae quello ch’el vede, che è virtù organica, cioè la fantasia, non puote a certe cose salire (però che la fantasia nol puote aiutare, chè non ha lo di che), sì come sono le sustanze partite da materia; de le quali se alcuna considerazione di quella avere potemo, intendere non le potemo nè comprendere perfettamente. 10. E di ciò non è l’uomo da biasimare, chè non esso, dico, fue di questo difetto fattore, anzi fece ciò la natura universale, cioè Iddio, che volse in questa vita privare noi da questa luce; che, perchè elli lo si facesse, presuntuoso sarebbe a ragionare. 11. Sì che, se la mia considerazione mi transportava in parte dove la fantasia venia meno a lo ‘ntelletto, se io non potea intendere non sono da biasimare. Ancora, è posto fine al nostro ingegno, a ciascuna sua operazione, non da noi ma da l’universale natura; e però è da sapere che più ampi sono li termini de lo ‘ngegno [a pensare] che a parlare, e più ampi a parlare che ad accennare. 12. Dunque se ‘l pensier nostro, non solamente quello che a perfetto intelletto non viene ma eziandio quello che a perfetto intelletto si termina, è vincente del parlare, non semo noi da biasimare, però che non semo di ciò fattori. 13. E però manifesto me veramente scusare quando dico: Di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto E ‘l parlar nostro, che non ha valore Di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore; chè assai si dee chiaramente vedere la buona volontade, a la quale aver si dee rispetto ne li meriti umani. E così omai s’intenda la prima parte principale di questa canzone, che corre mo per mano.

CAPITOLO V

1. Quando, ragionando per la prima parte, aperta è la sentenza di quella, procedere si conviene a la seconda; de la quale per meglio vedere, tre parti se ne vogliono fare, secondo che in tre versi si comprende: che ne la prima parte io commendo questa donna interamente e comunemente, sì ne l'anima come nel corpo; ne la seconda discendo a laude speziale de l'anima; ne la terza a laude speziale del corpo. 2. La prima parte comincia: Non vede il sol, che tutto 'l mondo gira; la seconda comincia: In lei discende la virtù divina; la terza comincia: Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto; e queste parti secondo ordine sono da ragionare. 3. Dice adunque: Non vede il sol, che tutto 'l mondo gira; dove è da sapere, a perfetta intelligenza avere, come lo mondo dal sole è girato. Prima dico che per lo mondo io non intendo qui tutto 'l corpo de l'universo, ma solamente questa parte del mare e de la terra, seguendo la volgare voce, chè così s'usa chiamare: onde dice alcuno, 'quelli hae tutto lo mondo veduto', dicendo parte del mare e della terra. 4. Questo mondo volse Pittagora - e li suoi seguaci - dicere che fosse una de le stelle e che un'altra a lei fosse opposita, così fatta, e chiamava quella Anticthona; e dicea ch'erano ambe in una spera che si volvea da occidente in oriente, e per questa revoluzione si girava lo sole intorno a noi, e ora si vedea e ora non si vedea. 5. E dicea che 'l fuoco era nel mezzo di queste, ponendo quello essere più nobile corpo che l'acqua e che la terra, e ponendo lo mezzo nobilissimo intra li luoghi de li quattro corpi simplici: e però dicea che 'l fuoco, quando parea salire, secondo lo vero al mezzo discendea. 6. Platone fu poi d'altra oppinione, e scrisse in uno suo libro che si chiama Timeo, che la terra col mare era bene lo mezzo di tutto, ma che 'l suo tondo tutto si girava a torno al suo centro, seguendo lo primo movimento del cielo; ma tarda molto per la sua grossa matera e per la massima distanza da quello. 7. Queste oppinioni sono riprovate per false nel secondo De Celo et Mundo da quello glorioso filosofo al quale la natura più aperse li suoi segreti; e per lui quivi è provato, questo mondo, cioè la terra, stare in sè stabile e fissa in sempiterno. E le sue ragioni, che Aristotile dice a rompere costoro e affermare la veritade, non è mia intenzione qui narrare, perchè assai basta a la gente a cu' io parlo, per la sua grande autoritade sapere che questa terra è fissa e non si gira, e che essa col mare è centro del cielo. 8. Questo cielo si gira intorno a questo centro continuamente, sì come noi vedemo; ne la cui girazione conviene di necessitade essere due poli fermi, e uno cerchio equalmente distante da quelli, che massimamente giri. Di questi due poli, l'uno è manifesto quasi a tutta la terra discoperta, cioè questo settentrionale; l'altro è quasi a tutta la discoperta terra celato, cioè lo

meridionale. Lo cerchio che nel mezzo di questi s'intende, sì è quella parte del cielo sotto la quale si gira lo sole quando va con l'Ariete e con la Libra. 9. Onde è da sapere, che se una pietra potesse cadere da questo nostro polo, ella cadrebbe là oltre nel mare Oceano, a punto in su quel dosso del mare dove, se fosse uno uomo, la stella [li] sarebbe sempre in sul mezzo del capo; - e credo che da Roma a questo luogo, andando diritto per tramontana, sia spazio quasi di dumila secento miglia, o poco dal più al meno -. 10. Imaginando adunque, per meglio vedere, in questo luogo ch'io dissi sia una cittade e abbia nome Maria, dico ancora che se da l'altro polo, cioè meridionale, cadesse una pietra, ch'ella caderebbe in su quel dosso del mare Oceano ch'è a punto in questa palla opposito a Maria; - e credo che da Roma là dove caderebbe questa seconda pietra, diritto andando per lo mezzogiorno, sia spazio di settemila cinquecento miglia, o poco dal più al meno -. 11. E qui imaginiamo un'altra cittade, che abbia nome Lucia - ed è spazio, da qualunque lato si tira la corda, di diecimila dugento miglia -: èli, tra l'una e l'altra, mezzo lo cerchio di tutta questa palla, sì che li cittadini di Maria tengono le piante contra le piante di quelli di Lucia. 12. Imaginisi anco uno cerchio in su questa palla, che sia in ciascuna parte sua tanto lungi da Maria quanto da Lucia. Credo che questo cerchio - secondo ch'io comprendo per le sentenze de li astrologi, e per quella d'Alberto de la Magna nel libro de la Natura de' luoghi e de le proprietadi de li elementi, e anco per la testimonianza di Lucano nel nono suo libro - dividerebbe questa terra discoperta dal mare Oceano, là nel mezzodie, quasi per tutta l'estremità del primo climate, dove sono intra l'altre genti li Garamanti, che stanno quasi sempre nudi; a li quali venne Catone col popolo di Roma, la signoria di Cesare fuggendo. 13. Segnati questi tre luoghi sopra questa palla, leggiermente si può vedere come lo sole la gira. Dico adunque che 'l cielo del sole si rivolge da occidente in oriente, non dirittamente contra lo movimento diurno, cioè del die e de la notte, ma tortamente contra quello; sì che 'l suo mezzo cerchio, che equalmente e 'ntra li suoi poli, nel quale è lo corpo del sole, sega in due parti opposite lo [mezzo] cerchio de li due primi poli, cioè nel principio de l'Ariete e nel principio de la Libra, e partesi per due archi da esso, uno ver settentrione e un altro ver mezzogiorno. 14. Li punti [di mezzo] de li quali archi si dilungano equalmente dal primo cerchio, da ogni parte, per ventitrè gradi e uno punto più; e l'uno punto è lo principio del Cancro, e l'altro è lo principio del Capricorno. Però conviene che Maria veggia nel principio de l'Ariete, quando lo sole va sotto lo mezzo cerchio de li primi poli, esso sole girar lo mondo intorno giù a la terra, o vero al mare, come una mola de la quale non paia più che mezzo lo corpo suo; e questa veggia venire montando a guisa d'una vite dintorno, tanto che compia novanta e una rota e poco più. 15. E quando queste rote sono compiute, lo suo

montare è a Maria quasi tanto quanto esso monta a noi ne la mezza terra, [quando] ‘l giorno è de la mezza notte iguale; e se uno uomo fosse dritto in Maria e sempre al sole volgesse lo viso, vederebbesi quello andare ver lo braccio destro. 16. Poi per la medesima via par discendere altre novanta e una rota e poco più, tanto ch’elli gira intorno giù a la terra, o vero al mare, sè non tutto mostrando; e poi si cela, e comincialo a vedere Lucia, lo quale montare e discendere intorno a sè allor vede con altrettante rote quante vede Maria. 17. E se uno uomo fosse in Lucia dritto, sempre che volgesse la faccia in ver lo sole, vedrebbe quello andarsi nel braccio sinistro. Per che si può vedere che questi luoghi hanno un dì l’anno di sei mesi; e una notte d’altrettanto tempo; e quando l’uno ha lo giorno, e l’altro ha la notte. 18. Conviene anche che lo cerchio dove sono li Garamanti, come detto è, in su questa palla, veggia lo sole a punto sopra sè girare, non a modo di mola, ma di [rota]; la quale non può in alcuna parte vedere se non mezza, quando va sotto l’Ariete. E poi lo vede partire da sè e venire verso Maria novanta e uno die e poco più, e per altrettanti a sè tornare; e poi, quando è tornato, va sotto la Libra, e anche si parte e va ver Lucia novanta e uno dì e poco più, e in altrettanti ritorna. 19. E questo luogo, lo quale tutta la palla cerchia, sempre ha lo die iguale con la notte, o di qua o di là che ‘l sole li vada; e due volte l’anno ha la state grandissima di calore, e due piccioli verni. 20. Conviene anche che li due spazii, che sono in mezzo de le due cittadi imaginate e lo [cerchio] del mezzo, veggiano lo sole disvariatamente, secondo che sono remoti e propinqui questi luoghi; sì come omai, per quello che detto è, puote vedere chi ha nobile ingegno, al quale è bello un poco di fatica lasciare. 21. Per che vedere omai si puote, che per lo divino provedimento lo mondo è sì ordinato che, volta la spera del sole e tornata a uno punto, questa palla dove noi siamo in ciascuna parte di sè riceve tanto tempo di luce quanto di tenebre. 22. O ineffabile sapienza che così ordinasti, quanto è povera la nostra mente a te comprendere! E voi a cui utilitade e diletto io scrivo, in quanta cechitade vivete, non levando li occhi suso a queste cose, tenendoli fissi nel fango de la vostra stoltezza!

CAPITOLO VI

1. Nel precedente capitolo è mostrato per che modo lo sole gira; sì che omai si puote procedere a dimostrare la sentenza de la parte a la quale s'intende. Dico adunque che in questa parte prima comincio a commendare questa donna per comparazione a l'altre cose; e dico che 'l sole, girando lo mondo, non vede alcuna cosa così gentile come costei: per che segue che questa sia, secondo le parole, gentilissima di tutte le cose che 'l sole allumina. 2. E dice: in quell'ora; onde è da sapere che 'ora' per due modi si prende da li astrologi. L'uno si è, che del die e de la notte fanno ventiquattr'ore, cioè dodici del die e dodici de la notte, quanto che 'l die sia grande o picciolo; e queste ore si fanno picciole e grandi nel dì e ne la notte, secondo che 'l dì e la notte cresce e menoma. E queste ore usa la Chiesa, quando dice Prima, Terza, Sesta e Nona, e chiamansi ore temporali. 3. L'altro modo si è, che faccendo del dì e de la notte ventiquattr'ore, tal volta ha lo die le quindici ore, e la notte le nove; tal volta ha la notte le sedici e lo die le otto, secondo che cresce e menoma lo die e la notte: e chiamansi ore equali. E ne lo equinozio sempre queste e quelle che temporali si chiamano sono una cosa; però che, essendo lo dì equale de la notte, conviene così avvenire. 4. Poi quando dico: Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira, commendo lei, non avendo rispetto ad altra cosa. E dico che le Intelligenze del cielo la mirano, e che la gente di qua giù gentile pensano di costei, quando più hanno di quello che loro diletta. E qui è da sapere che ciascuno Intelletto di sopra, secondo ch'è scritto nel libro de le Cagioni, conosce quello che è sopra sè e quello che è sotto sè. 5. Conosce adunque Iddio sì come sua cagione, conosce quello che è sotto sè sì come suo effetto; e però che Dio è universalissima cagione di tutte le cose, conoscendo lui, tutte le cose conosce in sè, secondo lo modo de la Intelligenza. Per che tutte le Intelligenze conoscono la forma umana in quanto ella è per intenzione regolata ne la divina mente; e massimamente conoscono quella le Intelligenze motrici, però che sono spezialissime cagioni di quella e d'ogni forma generata, e conoscono quella perfettissima, tanto quanto essere puote, sì come loro regola ed essemplo. 6. E se essa umana forma, essemplata e individuata, non è perfetta, non è manco de lo detto essemplo, ma de la materia la quale individua. Però quando dico: Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira, non voglio altro dire se non ch'ella è così fatta come l'essemplo intenzionale che de la umana essenzia è ne la divina mente e, per quella, in tutte l'altre, massimamente in quelle menti angeliche che fabbricano col cielo queste cose di qua giuso. 7. E a questo affermare, soggiungo quando dico: E quella gente che qui s'innamora. Dove è da sapere che ciascuna cosa massimamente desidera la sua perfezione, e in quella si queta ogni suo

desiderio, e per quella ogni cosa è desiderata: e questo è quello desiderio che sempre ne fa parere ogni dilettazione manca; chè nulla dilettazione è sì grande in questa vita che a l'anima nostra possa torre la sete, che sempre lo desiderio che detto è non rimagna nel pensiero. 8. E però che questa è veramente quella perfezione, dico che quella gente che qua giù maggiore diletto riceve quando più hanno di pace, allora rimane questa ne' loro pensieri, per questa, dico, tanto essere perfetta quanto sommamente essere puote l'umana essenzia. 9. Poi quando dico: Suo esser tanto a Quei che lel dà piace, mostro che non solamente questa donna è perfettissima ne la umana generazione, ma più che perfettissima in quanto riceve de la divina bontade oltre lo debito umano. 10. Onde ragionevolmente si puote credere che, sì come ciascuno maestro ama più la sua opera ottima che l'altre, così Dio ama più la persona umana ottima che tutte l'altre; e però che la sua larghezza non si stringe da necessitade d'alcuno termine, non ha riguardo lo suo amore al debito di colui che riceve, ma soperchia quello in dono e in beneficio di vertù e di grazia. Onde dico qui che esso Dio, che dà l'essere a costei, per caritade de la sua perfezione infonde in essa de la sua bontade oltre li termini del debito de la nostra natura. 11. Poi quando dico: La sua anima pura, pruovo ciò che detto è per sensibile testimonianza. Ove è da sapere che, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Anima, l'anima è atto del corpo: e se ella è suo atto, è sua cagione; e però che, sì come è scritto nel libro allegato de le Cagioni, ogni cagione infonde nel suo effetto de la bontade che riceve da la cagione sua, infonde e rende al corpo suo de la bontade de la cagione sua, ch'è Dio. 12. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che in costei si veggiano, quanto è da la parte del corpo, maravigliose cose, tanto che fanno ogni guardatore disioso di quelle vedere, manifesto è che la sua forma, cioè la sua anima, che lo conduce sì come cagione propria, riceva miracolosamente la graziosa bontade di Dio. 13. E così [si] pruova, per questa apparenza, che è oltre lo debito de la natura nostra (la quale in lei è perfettissima come detto è di sopra) questa donna da Dio beneficiata e fatta nobile cosa. E questa è tutta la sentenza litterale de la prima parte de la seconda parte principale.

CAPITOLO VII

1. Commendata questa donna comunemente, sì secondo l'anima come secondo lo corpo, io procedo a commendare lei spezialmente secondo l'anima; e prima la commendo secondo che 'l suo bene è grande in sè, poi la commendo secondo che 'l suo bene è grande in altrui e utile al mondo. 2. E comincia questa parte seconda quando dico: Di costei si può dire. Dunque dico prima: In lei discende la virtù divina. Ove è da sapere che la divina bontade in tutte le cose discende, e altrimenti essere non potrebbero; ma avvegna che questa bontade si muova da simplicissimo principio, diversamente si riceve, secondo più e meno, da le cose riceventi. Onde scritto è nel libro de le Cagioni: «La prima bontade manda le sue bontadi sopra le cose con uno discorrimento». 3. Veramente ciascuna cosa riceve da quello discorrimento secondo lo modo de la sua vertù e de lo suo essere; e di ciò sensibile essemplo avere potemo dal sole. Vedemo la luce del sole, la quale è una, da uno fonte derivata, diversamente da le corpora essere ricevuta; sì come dice Alberto in quello libro che fa de lo Intelletto. Chè certi corpi, per molta chiaritade di diafano avere in sè mista, tosto che 'l sole li vede diventano tanto luminosi, che per multiplicamento di luce in quelle e ne lo loro aspetto, rendono a li altri di sè grande splendore, sì come è l'oro, e alcuna pietra. 4. Certi sono che, per esser del tutto diafani, non solamente ricevono la luce, ma quella non impediscono, anzi rendono lei del loro colore colorata ne l'altre cose. E certi sono tanto vincenti ne la purità del diafano, che divengono sì raggianti, che vincono l'armonia de l'occhio, e non si lasciano vedere sanza fatica del viso, sì come sono li specchi. Certi altri sono tanto sanza diafano, che quasi poco de la luce ricevono, sì com'è la terra. 5. Così la bontà di Dio è ricevuta altrimenti da le sustanze separate, cioè da li Angeli, che sono sanza grossezza di materia, quasi diafani per la purità de la loro forma, e altrimenti da l'anima umana, che, avvegna che da una parte sia da materia libera, da un'altra è impedita, sì come l'uomo ch'è tutto ne l'acqua fuor del capo, del quale non si può dire che tutto sia ne l'acqua nè tutto fuor da quella; e altrimenti da li animali, la cui anima tutta in materia è compresa, ma alquanto è nobilitata; e altrimenti da le piante, e altrimenti da le minere; e altrimenti da la terra che da li altri [elementi], però che è materialissima, e però remotissima e improporzionalissima a la prima simplicissima e nobilissima vertude, che sola è intellettuale, cioè Dio. 6. E avvegna che posti siano qui gradi generali, nondimeno si possono porre gradi singulari; cioè che quella riceve, de l'anime umane, altrimenti una che un'altra. E però che ne l'ordine intellettuale de l'universo si sale e discende per gradi quasi continui da la infima forma a l'altissima [e da l'altissima] a la infima, sì

come vedemo ne l’ordine sensibile; e tra l’angelica natura, che è cosa intellettuale, e l’anima umana non sia grado alcuno, ma sia quasi l’uno a l’altro continuo per li ordini de li gradi, e tra l’anima umana e l’anima più perfetta de li bruti animali ancor mezzo alcuno non sia; e noi veggiamo molti uomini tanto vili e di sì bassa condizione, che quasi non pare essere altro che bestia; e così è da porre e da credere fermamente, che sia alcuno tanto nobile e di sì alta condizione che quasi non sia altro che angelo: altrimenti non si continuerebbe l’umana spezie da ogni parte, che esser non può. 7. E questi cotali chiama Aristotile, nel settimo de l’Etica, divini; e cotale dico io che è questa donna, sì che la divina virtude, a guisa che discende ne l’angelo, discende in lei. 8. Poi quando dico: E qual donna gentil questo non crede, pruovo questo per la esperienza che aver di lei si può in quelle operazioni che sono proprie de l’anima razionale, dove la divina luce più espeditamente raggia; cioè nel parlare e ne li atti che reggimenti e portamenti sogliono essere chiamati. Onde è da sapere che solamente l’uomo intra li animali parla, e ha reggimenti e atti che si dicono razionali, però che solo elli ha in sè ragione. 9. E se alcuno volesse dire contra, dicendo che alcuno uccello parli, sì come pare di certi, massimamente de la gazza e del pappagallo, e che alcuna bestia fa atti o vero reggimenti, sì come pare de la scimia e d’alcuno altro, rispondo che non è vero che parlino nè che abbiano reggimenti, però che non hanno ragione, da la quale queste cose convegnono procedere; nè è in loro lo principio di queste operazioni, nè conoscono che sia ciò, nè intendono per quello alcuna cosa significare, ma solo quello che veggiono e odono ripresentare. 10. Onde, secondo la imagine de le corpora in alcuno corpo lucido si ripresenta, sì come ne lo specchio, e sì la imagine corporale che lo specchio dimostra non è vera; così la imagine de la ragione, cioè li atti e lo parlare [che] l’anima bruta ripresenta, o vero dimostra, non è vera. 11. Dico che ‘qual donna gentile non crede quello ch’io dico, che vada con lei, e miri li suoi atti’ - non dico ‘qual uomo’, però che più onestamente [di donna] per le donne si prende esperienza che per l’uomo -; e dico quello che di lei colei sentirà, dicendo quello che fa lo suo parlare, e che fanno li suoi reggimenti. 12. Chè il suo parlare, per l’altezza e per la dolcezza sua, genera ne la mente di chi l’ode uno pensiero d’amore, lo quale io chiamo spirito celestiale, però che là su è lo principio e di là su viene la sua sentenza, sì come di sopra è narrato; del qual pensiero si procede in ferma oppinione che questa sia miraculosa donna di vertude. 13. E suoi atti, per la loro soavitade e per la loro misura, fanno amore disvegliare e risentire là dovunque è de la sua potenza seminata per buona natura. La quale natural semenza si fa come nel sequente trattato si mostra. 14. Poi quando dico: Di costei si può dire, intendo narrare come la bontà e la vertù de la sua anima è a li altri buona e utile. E prima, com’ella è utile a l’altre donne, dicendo: Gentile è in

donna ciò che in lei si trova; dove manifesto essemplo rendo a le donne, nel quale mirando possano [sè] far parere gentili, quello seguitando. 15. Secondamente narro come ella è utile a tutte le genti, dicendo che l'aspetto suo aiuta la nostra fede, la quale più che tutte l'altre cose è utile a tutta l'umana generazione, sì come quella per la quale campiamo da etternale morte e acquistiamo etternale vita. 16. E la nostra fede aiuta; però che, con ciò sia cosa che principalissimo fondamento de la fede nostra siano miracoli fatti per colui che fu crucifisso - lo quale creò la nostra ragione, e volle che fosse minore del suo potere -, e fatti poi nel nome suo per li santi suoi; e molti siano sì ostinati che di quelli miracoli per alcuna nebbia siano dubbiosi, e non possano credere miracolo alcuno sanza visibilmente avere di ciò esperienza; e questa donna sia una cosa visibilmente miraculosa, de la quale li occhi de li uomini cotidianamente possono esperienza avere, ed a noi faccia possibili li altri; manifesto è che questa donna, col suo mirabile aspetto, la nostra fede aiuta. 17. E però ultimamente dico che da etterno, cioè etternamente, fu ordinata ne la mente di Dio in testimonio de la fede a coloro che in questo tempo vivono. E così termina la seconda parte [de la seconda parte], secondo la litterale sentenza.

CAPITOLO VIII

1. Intra li effetti de la divina sapienza l'uomo è mirabilissimo, considerato come in una forma la divina virtute tre nature congiunse, e come sottilmente armoniato conviene esser lo corpo suo, a cotal forma essendo organizzato per tutte quasi sue vertudi. 2. Per che, per la molta concordia che 'ntra tanti organi conviene a bene rispondersi, pochi perfetti uomini in tanto numero sono. E se così è mirabile questa creatura, certo non pur con le parole è da temere di trattare di sue condizioni, ma eziandio col pensiero, secondo quelle parole de lo Ecclesiastico: «La sapienza di Dio, precedente tutte le cose, chi cercava?», e quelle altre dove dice: «Più alte cose di te non dimanderai e più forti cose di te non cercherai; ma quelle cose che Dio ti comandò, pensa, e in più sue opere non sie curioso», cioè sollicito. 3. Io adunque, che in questa terza particola d'alcuna condizione di cotal creatura parlare intendo, in quanto nel suo corpo, per bontade de l'anima, sensibile bellezza appare, temorosamente non sicuro comincio, intendendo, e se non a pieno, almeno alcuna cosa di tanto nodo disnodare. 4. Dico adunque che, poi che aperta è la sentenza di quella particola ne la quale questa donna è commendata da la parte de l'anima, da procedere e da vedere è come, quando dico Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto, io commendo lei da la parte del corpo. 5. E dico che ne lo suo aspetto appariscono cose le quali dimostrano de' piaceri [di Paradiso]. E intra li altri di quelli lo più nobile e quello che è [inizio] e fine di tutti li altri, sì è contentarsi, e questo sì è essere beato; e questo piacere è veramente, avvegna che per altro modo, ne l'aspetto di costei. Chè, guardando costei, la gente si contenta, tanto dolcemente ciba la sua bellezza li occhi de' riguardatori; ma per altro modo che per lo contentare in Paradiso [che] è perpetuo, chè non può ad alcuno essere questo. 6. E però che potrebbe alcuno aver domandato dove questo mirabile piacere appare in costei, distinguo ne la sua persona due parti, ne le quali l'umana piacenza e dispiacenza più appare. Onde è da sapere che in qualunque parte l'anima più adopera del suo officio, che a quella più fissamente intende ad adornare, e più sottilmente quivi adopera. 7. Onde vedemo che ne la faccia de l'uomo, là dove fa più del suo officio che in alcuna parte di fuori, tanto sottilmente intende, che, per sottigliarsi quivi tanto quanto ne la sua materia puote, nullo viso ad altro viso è simile; perchè l'ultima potenza de la materia, la qual è in tutti quasi dissimile, quivi si riduce in atto. 8. E però che ne la faccia massimamente in due luoghi opera l'anima - però che in quelli due luoghi quasi tutte e tre le nature de l'anima hanno giurisdizione - cioè ne li occhi e ne la bocca, quelli massimamente adorna e quivi pone lo 'ntento tutto a fare bello, se puote. E in questi due luoghi dico io che appariscono questi

piaceri dicendo: ne li occhi e nel suo dolce riso. 9. Li quali due luoghi, per bella similitudine, si possono appellare balconi de la donna che nel dificio del corpo abita, cioè l'anima; però che quivi, avvegna che quasi velata, spesse volte si dimostra. Dimostrasi ne li occhi tanto manifesta, che conoscer si può la sua presente passione, chi bene là mira. 10. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che sei passioni siano propie de l'anima umana, de le quali fa menzione lo Filosofo ne la sua Rettorica, cioè grazia, zelo, misericordia, invidia, amore e vergogna, di nulla di queste puote l'anima essere passionata che a la finestra de li occhi non vegna la sembianza, se per grande vertù dentro non si chiude. Onde alcuno già si trasse li occhi, perchè la vergogna d'entro non paresse di fuori; sì come dice Stazio poeta del tebano Edipo, quando dice che «con etterna notte solvette lo suo dannato pudore». 11. Dimostrasi ne la bocca, quasi come colore dopo vetro. E che è ridere se non una corruscazione de la dilettazione de l'anima, cioè uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro? E però si conviene a l'uomo, a dimostrare la sua anima ne l'allegrezza moderata, moderatamente ridere, con onesta severitade e con poco movimento de la sua [f]accia; sì che donna, che allora si dimostra come detto è, paia modesta e non dissoluta. 12. Onde ciò fare ne comanda lo Libro de le quattro vertù cardinali: «Lo tuo riso sia sanza cachinno», cioè sanza schiamazzare come gallina. Ahi mirabile riso de la mia donna, di cui io parlo, che mai non si sentia se non de l'occhio! 13. E dico che Amore le reca queste cose quivi, sì come a luogo suo; dove si può amore doppiamente considerare. Prima l'amore de l'anima, speziale a questi luoghi; secondamente l'amore universale che le cose dispone ad amare e ad essere amate, che ordina l'anima ad adornare queste parti. 14. Poi quando dico: Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto, escuso me di ciò, che di tanta eccellenza di biltade poco pare che io tratti sovrastando a quella; e dico che poco ne dico per due ragioni. L'una si è che queste cose che paiono nel suo aspetto soverchiano lo 'ntelletto nostro, cioè umano: e dico come questo soverchiare è fatto, che è fatto per lo modo che soverchia lo sole lo fragile viso, non pur lo sano e forte; l'altra si è che fissamente in ess[e] guardare non può, perchè quivi s'inebria l'anima, sì che incontanente, dopo di sguardare, disvia in ciascuna sua operazione. 15. Poi quando dico: Sua bieltà piove fiammelle di foco, ricorro a ritrattare del suo effetto, poi che di lei trattare interamente non si può. Onde è da sapere che di tutte quelle cose che lo 'ntelletto nostro vincono, sì che non può vedere quello che sono, convenevolissimo trattare è per li loro effetti: onde di Dio, e de le sustanze separate, e de la prima materia, così trattando, potemo avere alcuna conoscenza. 16. E però dico che la biltade di quella piove fiammelle di foco, cioè ardore d'amore e di caritade; animate d'un spirito gentile, cioè informato ardore d'un gentile spirito, cioè diritto appetito, per lo quale e del quale nasce

origine di buono pensiero. E non solamente fa questo, ma disfà e distrugge lo suo contrario - de li buoni pensieri -, cioè li vizii innati, li quali massimamente sono di buoni pensieri nemici. 17. E qui è da sapere che certi vizii sono ne l'uomo a li quali naturalmente elli è disposto - sì come certi per complessione collerica sono ad ira disposti -, e questi cotali vizii sono innati, cioè connaturali. Altri sono vizii consuetudinarii, a li quali non ha colpa la complessione ma la consuetudine, sì come la intemperanza, e massimamente, del vino: e questi vizii si fuggono e si vincono per buona consuetudine, e fassi l'uomo per essa virtuoso, sanza fatica avere ne la sua moderazione, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Etica. 18. Veramente questa differenza è intra le passioni connaturali e le consuetudinarie, che le consuetudinarie per buona consuetudine del tutto vanno via; però che lo principio loro, cioè la mala consuetudine, per lo suo contrario si corrompe; ma le connaturali, lo principio de le quali è la natura del passionato, tutto che molto per buona consuetudine si facciano lievi, del tutto non se ne vanno quanto al primo movimento, ma vannosene bene del tutto quanto a durazione; però che la consuetudine non è equabile a la natura, ne la quale è lo principio di quelle. 19. E però è più laudabile l'uomo che dirizza sè e regge sè mal naturato contra l'impeto de la natura, che colui che ben naturato si sostiene in buono reggimento o disviato si rinvia; sì come è più laudabile uno mal cavallo reggere che un altro non reo. 20. Dico adunque che queste fiammelle che piovono da la sua biltade, come detto è, rompono li vizii innati, cioè connaturali, a dare a intendere che la sua bellezza ha podestade in rinnovare natura in coloro che la mirano; ch'è miracolosa cosa. E questo conferma quello che detto è di sopra ne l'altro capitolo, quando dico ch'ella è aiutatrice de la fede nostra. 21. Ultimamente quando dico: Però qual donna sente sua bieltate, conchiudo, sotto colore d'ammonire altrui, lo fine a che fatta fue tanta biltade; e dico che qual donna sente per manco la sua biltade biasimare, guardi in questo perfettissimo essemplo. Dove s'intende che non pur a migliorare lo bene è fatta, ma eziandio a fare de la mala cosa buona cosa. 22. E soggiugne in fine: Costei pensò chi mosse l'universo, cioè Dio, per dare a intendere che per divino proponimento la natura cotale effetto produsse. E così termina tutta la seconda parte principale di questa canzone.

CAPITOLO IX

1. L’ordine del presente trattato richiede - poi che le due parti di questa canzone per me sono, secondo che fu la mia intenzione, ragionate - che a la terza si proceda, ne la quale io intendo purgare la canzone da una riprensione, la quale a lei potrebbe essere istata contraria, e a questo che [io parlo. Chè] io, prima che a la sua composizione venisse, parendo a me questa donna fatta contra me fiera e superba alquanto, feci una ballatetta ne la quale chiamai questa donna orgogliosa e dispietata: che pare esser contra quello che qui si ragiona di sopra. 2. E però mi volgo a la canzone, e sotto colore d’insegnare a lei come scusare la conviene, scuso quella: ed è una figura questa, quando a le cose inanimate si parla, che si chiama da li rettorici prosopopeia; e usanla molto spesso li poeti. [E comincia questa parte terza:] Canzone, e’ par che tu parli contraro. 3. Lo ‘ntelletto de la quale a più agevolmente dare a intendere, mi conviene in tre particole dividere: che prima si propone a che la scusa fa mestiere; poi si produce con la scusa, quando dico: Tu sai che ‘l cielo; ultimamente parlo a la canzone sì come a persona ammaestrata di quello che dee fare, quando dico: Così ti scusa, se ti fa mestero. 4. Dico dunque in prima: ‘O canzone, che parli di questa donna cotanta loda, e’ par che tu sii contraria ad una tua sorella’. Per similitudine dico ‘sorella’; chè sì come sorella è detta quella femmina che da uno medesimo generante è generata, così puote l’uomo dire ‘sorella’ de l’opera che da uno medesimo operante è operata; chè la nostra operazione in alcuno modo è generazione. E dico che par che parli contrara a quella, dicendo: tu fai costei umile, e quella la fa superba, cioè fera e disdegnosa, che tanto vale. 5. Proposta questa accusa, procedo a la scusa per essemplo, ne lo quale, alcuna volta, la veritade si discorda da l’apparenza, e, altra, per diverso rispetto si puote tra[nsmu]tare. Dico: Tu sai che ‘l ciel sempr’è lucente e chiaro, cioè sempr’è con chiaritade; ma per alcuna cagione alcuna volta è licito di dire quello essere tenebroso. 6. Dove è da sapere che, propriamente, è visibile lo colore e la luce, sì come Aristotile vuole nel secondo de l’Anima, e nel libro del Senso e Sensato. Ben è altra cosa visibile, ma non propriamente, però che [anche] altro senso sente quello, sì che non si può dire che sia propriamente visibile, nè propriamente tangibile; sì come è la figura, la grandezza, lo numero, lo movimento e lo stare fermo, che sensibili [comuni] si chiamano: le quali cose con più sensi comprendiamo. Ma lo colore e la luce sono propriamente; perchè solo col viso comprendiamo ciò, e non con altro senso. 7. Queste cose visibili, sì le proprie come le comuni in quanto sono visibili, vengono dentro a l’occhio - non dico le cose, ma le forme loro - per lo mezzo diafano, non realmente ma intenzionalmente, sì quasi come in vetro

transparente. 8. E ne l’acqua ch’è ne la pupilla de l’occhio, questo discorso, che fa la forma visibile per lo mezzo, sì si compie, perchè quell’acqua è terminata - quasi come specchio, che è vetro terminato con piombo -, sì che passar più non può, ma quivi, a modo d’una palla, percossa si ferma; sì che la forma, che nel mezzo transparente non pare, [ne l’acqua pare] lucida e terminata. E questo è quello per che nel vetro piombato la imagine appare, e non in altro. 9. Di questa pupilla lo spirito visivo, che si continua da essa, a la parte del cerebro dinanzi, dov’è la sensibile virtute sì come in principio fontale, subitamente sanza tempo la ripresenta, e così vedemo. Per che, acciò che la visione sia verace, cioè cotale qual è la cosa visibile in sè, conviene che lo mezzo per lo quale a l’occhio viene la forma sia sanza ogni colore, e l’acqua de la pupilla similemente: altrimenti si macolerebbe la forma visibile del color del mezzo e di quello de la pupilla. 10. E però coloro che vogliono far parere le cose ne lo specchio d’alcuno colore, interpongono di quello colore tra ‘l vetro e ‘l piombo, sì che ‘l vetro ne rimane compreso. Veramente Plato e altri flosofi dissero che ‘l nostro vedere non era perchè lo visibile venisse a l’occhio, ma perchè la virtù visiva andava fuori al visibile: e questa oppinione è riprovata per falsa dal Filosofo in quello del Senso e Sensato. 11. Veduto questo modo de la vista, vedere si può leggermente che, avvegna che la stella sempre sia d’un modo chiara e lucente, e non riceva mutazione alcuna se non di movimento locale, sì come in quello De Celo et Mundo è provato, per più cagioni puote parere non chiara e non lucente. 12. Però puote parere così per lo mezzo che continuamente si transmuta. Transmutasi questo mezzo di molta luce in poca luce, sì come a la presenza del sole e a la sua assenza; e a la presenza lo mezzo, che è diafano, è tanto pieno di lume che è vincente de la stella, e però [non] pare più lucente. Transmutasi anche questo mezzo di sottile in grosso, di secco in umido, per li vapori de la terra che continuamente salgono: lo quale mezzo, così transmutato, transmuta la immagine de la stella che viene per esso, per la grossezza in oscuritade, e per l’umido e per lo secco in colore. 13. Però puote anche parere così per l’organo visivo, cioè l’occhio, lo quale per infertade e per fatica si transmuta in alcuno coloramento e in alcuna debilitade; sì come avviene molte volte che per essere la tunica de la pupilla sanguinosa molto, per alcuna corruzione d’infertade, le cose paiono quasi tutte rubicunde, e però la stella ne pare colorata. 14. E per essere lo viso debilitato, incontra in esso alcuna disgregazione di spirito, sì che le cose non paiono unite ma disgregate, quasi a guisa che fa la nostra lettera in su la carta umida: e questo è quello per che molti, quando vogliono leggere, si dilungano le scritture da li occhi, perchè la imagine loro vegna dentro più lievemente e più sottile; e in ciò più rimane la lettera discreta ne la vista. 15. E però puote anche la stella parere turbata: e io fui esperto di questo l’anno

medesimo che nacque questa canzone, che per affaticare lo viso molto, a studio di leggere, in tanto debilitai li spiriti visivi che le stelle mi pareano tutte d'alcuno albore ombrate. 16. E per lunga riposanza in luoghi oscuri e freddi, e con affreddare lo corpo de l'occhio con l'acqua chiara, riuni' sì la vertù disgregata che tornai nel primo buono stato de la vista. E così appaiono molte cagioni, per le ragioni notate, per che la stella puote parere non com'ella è.

CAPITOLO X

1. Partendomi da questa disgressione, che mestiere è stata a vedere la veritade, ritorno al proposito e dico che sì come li nostri occhi ‘chiamano’, cioè giudicano, la stella talora altrimenti che sia la vera sua condizione, così quella ballatetta considerò questa donna secondo l’apparenza, discordante dal vero per infertade de l’anima, che di troppo disio era passionata. 2. E ciò manifesto quando dico: chè l’anima temea, sì che fiero mi parea ciò che vedea ne la sua presenza. Dov’è da sapere che quanto l’agente più al paziente sè unisce, tanto più forte è però la passione, sì come per la sentenza del Filosofo in quello De Generatione si può comprendere; onde, quanto la cosa desiderata più appropinqua al desiderante, tanto lo desiderio è maggiore, e l’anima, più passionata, più si unisce a la parte concupiscibile e più abbandona la ragione. Sì che allora non giudica come uomo la persona, ma quasi come altro animale pur secondo l’apparenza, non discernendo la veritade. 3. E questo è quello per che lo sembiante, onesto secondo lo vero, ne pare disdegnoso e fero; e secondo questo cotale sensuale giudicio parlò quella ballatetta. E in ciò s’intende assai che questa canzone considera questa donna secondo la veritade, per la discordanza che ha con quella. 4. E non sanza cagione dico: là v’ella mi senta, e non là dov’io la senta; ma in ciò voglio dare a intendere la grande virtù che li suoi occhi aveano sopra me: chè, come s’io fosse stato [diafano], così per ogni lato mi passava lo raggio loro. E quivi si potrebbero ragioni naturali e sovrannaturali assegnare; ma basti qui tanto avere detto: altrove ragionerò più convenevolemente. 5. Poi quando dico: Così ti scusa, se ti fa mestero, impongo a la canzone come per le ragioni assegnate ‘sè iscusi là dov’è mestiero’, cioè là dove alcuno dubitasse di questa contrarietade; che non è altro a dire se non che qualunque dubitasse in ciò, che questa canzone da quella ballatetta si discorda, miri in questa ragione che detta è. 6. E questa cotale figura in rettorica è molto laudabile, e anco necessaria, cioè quando le parole sono a una persona e la ‘ntenzione è a un’altra; però che l’ammonire è sempre laudabile e necessario, e non sempre sta convenevolemente ne la bocca di ciascuno. 7. Onde, quando lo figlio è conoscente del vizio del padre, e quando lo suddito è conoscente del vizio del segnore, e quando l’amico conosce che vergogna crescerebbe al suo amico quello ammonendo o menomerebbe suo onore, o conosce l’amico suo non paziente ma iracundo a l’ammonizione, questa figura è bellissima e utilissima, e puotesi chiamare ‘dissimulazione’. 8. Ed è simigliante a l’opera di quello savio guerrero che combatte lo castello da uno lato per levare la difesa da l’altro, che non vanno ad una parte la ‘ntenzione de l’aiutorio e la battaglia. 9. E impongo

anche a costei che domandi parola di parlare a questa donna di lei. Dove si puote intendere che l’uomo non dee essere presuntuoso a lodare altrui, non ponendo bene prima mente s’elli è piacere de la persona laudata; perchè molte volte credendosi [a] alcuno dar loda, si dà biasimo, o per difetto de lo dicitore o per difetto di quello che ode. 10. Onde molta discrezione in ciò avere si conviene; la qual discrezione è quasi uno domandare licenzia, per lo modo ch’io dico che domandi questa canzone. E così termina tutta la litterale sentenza di questo trattato; per che l’ordine de l’opera domanda a l’allegorica esposizione omai, seguendo la veritade, procedere.

CAPITOLO XI

1. Sì come l’ordine vuole ancora dal principio ritornando, dico che questa donna è quella donna de lo ‘ntelletto che Filosofia si chiama. Ma però che naturalmente le lode danno desiderio di conoscere la persona laudata; e conoscere la cosa sia sapere quello che ella è, in sè considerata e per tutte le sue c[au]se, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel principio de la Fisica; e ciò non dimostri lo nome, avvegna che ciò significhi, sì come dice nel quarto de la Metafisica (dove si dice che la diffinizione è quella ragione che ‘l nome significa), conviensi qui, prima che più oltre si proceda per le sue laude mostrare, dire che è questo che si chiama Filosofia, cioè quello che questo nome significa. 2. E poi dimostrata essa, più efficacemente si tratterà la presente allegoria. E prima dirò chi questo nome prima diede; poi procederò a la sua significanza. 3. Dico adunque che anticamente in Italia, quasi dal principio de la costituzione di Roma, che fu [sette]cento cinquanta anni [innanzi], poco dal più al meno, che ‘l Salvatore venisse, secondo che scrive Paulo Orosio, nel tempo quasi che Numa Pompilio, secondo re de li Romani, vivea uno filosofo nobilissimo, che si chiamò Pittagora. E che ello fosse in quel tempo, pare che ne tocchi alcuna cosa Tito Livio ne la prima parte del suo volume incidentemente. 4. E dinanzi da costui erano chiamati li seguitatori di scienza non filosofi ma sapienti, sì come furono quelli sette savi antichissimi, che la gente ancora nomina per fama: lo primo de li quali ebbe nome Solon, lo secondo Chilon, lo terzo Periandro, lo quarto Cleobulo, lo quinto Lindio, lo sesto Biante, e lo settimo Prieneo. 5. Questo Pittagora, domandato se egli si riputava sapiente, negò a sè questo vocabulo, e disse sè essere non sapiente, ma amatore di sapienza. E quinci nacque poi, ciascuno studioso in sapienza che fosse ‘amatore di sapienza’ chiamato, cioè ‘filosofo’; chè tanto vale in greco ‘philos’ com’è a dire ‘amore’ in latino, e quindi dicemo noi: ‘philos’ quasi amore, e ‘soph[os]’ quasi sapien[te]. Per che vedere si può che questi due vocabuli fanno questo nome di ‘filosofo’, che tanto vale a dire quanto ‘amatore di sapienza’: per che notare si puote che non d’arroganza, ma d’umilitade è vocabulo. 6. Da questo nasce lo vocabulo del suo proprio atto, Filosofia, sì come de lo amico nasce lo vocabulo del suo proprio atto, cioè Amicizia. Onde si può vedere, considerando la significanza del primo e del secondo vocabulo, che Filosofia non è altro che amistanza a sapienza, o vero a sapere; onde in alcuno modo si può dicere catuno filosofo secondo lo naturale amore che in ciascuno genera lo desiderio di sapere. 7. Ma però che l’essenziali passioni sono comuni a tutti, non si ragiona di quelle per vocabulo distinguente alcuno participante quella essenza; onde non diciamo Gianni amico

di Martino, intendendo solamente la naturale amistade significare per la quale tutti a tutti semo amici, ma l'amistà sopra la naturale generata, che è propria e distinta in singulari persone. Così non si dice filosofo alcuno per lo comune amore [al sapere]. 8. Ne la 'ntenzione d'Aristotile, ne l'ottavo de l'Etica, quelli si dice amico la cui amistà non è celata a la persona amata e a cui la persona amata è anche amica, sì che la benivolenza sia da ogni parte: e questo conviene essere o per utilitade, o per diletto, o per onestade. E così, acciò che sia filosofo, conviene essere l'amore a la sapienza, che fa l'una de le parti benivolente; conviene essere lo studio e la sollicitudine, che fa l'altra parte anche benivolente: sì che familiaritade e manifestamento di benivolenza nasce tra loro. Per che sanza amore e sanza studio non si può dire filosofo, ma conviene che l'uno e l'altro sia. 9. E sì come l'amistà per diletto fatta, o per utilitade, non è vera amistà ma per accidente, sì come l'Etica ne dimostra, così la filosofia per diletto o per utilitade non è vera filosofia ma per accidente. Onde non si dee dicere vero filosofo alcuno che, per alcuno diletto, con la sapienza in alcuna sua parte sia amico; sì come sono molti che si dilettano in intendere canzoni ed istudiare in quelle, e che si dilettano studiare in Rettorica o in Musica, e l'altre scienze fuggono e abbandonano, che sono tutte membra di sapienza. 10. Nè si dee chiamare vero filosofo colui che è amico di sapienza per utilitade, sì come sono li legisti, [li] medici e quasi tutti li religiosi, che non per sapere studiano ma per acquistare moneta o dignitade; e chi desse loro quello che acquistare intendono, non sovrastarebbero a lo studio. 11. E sì come intra le spezie de l'amistà quella che per utilitade è, meno amistà si può dicere, così questi cotali meno participano del nome del filosofo che alcuna altra gente; per che, sì come l'amistà per onestade fatta è vera e perfetta e perpetua, così la filosofia è vera e perfetta che è generata per onestade solamente, sanza altro rispetto, e per bontade de l'anima amica, che è per diritto appetito e per diritta ragione. 12. Sì ch'om[ai] qui si può dire, come la vera amistà de li uomini intra sè è che ciascuno ami tutto ciascuno, che 'l vero filosofo ciascuna parte de la sua sapienza ama, e la sapienza ciascuna parte del filosofo, in quanto tutto a sè lo riduce, e nullo suo pensiero ad altre cose lascia distendere. Onde essa Sapienza dice ne li Proverbi di Salomone: «Io amo coloro che amano me». 13. E sì come la vera amistade, astratta de l'animo, solo in sè considerata, ha per subietto la conoscenza de l'operazione buona, e per forma l'appetito di quella; così la filosofia, fuori d'anima, in sè considerata, ha per subietto lo 'ntendere, e per forma uno quasi divino amore a lo 'ntelletto. E sì come de la vera amistade è cagione efficiente la vertude, così de la filosofia è cagione efficiente la veritade. 14. E sì come fine de l'amistade vera è la buona dilezione, che procede dal convivere secondo l'umanitade propriamente, cioè secondo ragione, sì come

pare sentire Aristotile nel nono de l'Etica; così fine de la Filosofia è quella eccellentissima dilezione che non pate alcuna intermissione o vero difetto, cioè vera felicitade che per contemplazione de la veritade s'acquista. 15. E così si può vedere chi è omai questa mia donna, per tutte le sue cagioni e per la sua ragione, e perchè Filosofia si chiama, e chi è vero filosofo, e chi è per accidente. 16. Ma però che, per alcuno fervore d'animo, talvolta l'uno e l'altro termine de li atti e de le passioni si chiamano e per lo vocabulo de l'atto medesimo e de la passione (sì come fa Virgilio nel secondo de lo Eneidos, che chiama Enea [a Ettore]: «O luce», ch'è atto, e «speranza de' Troiani», che è passione, chè non era esso luce nè speranza, ma era termine onde venia loro la luce del consiglio, ed era termine in che si posava tutta la speranza de la loro salute; e sì come dice Stazio nel quinto del Thebaidos, quando Isifile dice ad Archimoro: «O consolazione de le cose e de la patria perduta, o onore del mio servigio»; sì come cotidianamente dicemo, mostrando l'amico, 'vedi l'amistade mia', e 'l padre dice al figlio 'amor mio'), per lunga consuetudine le scienze ne le quali più ferventemente la Filosofia termina la sua vista, sono chiamate per lo suo nome; sì come la Scienza Naturale, la Morale, e la Metafisica, la quale, perchè più necessariamente in quella termina lo suo viso e con più fervore, [Prima] Filosofia è chiamata. 17. Onde [vedere] si può come secondamente le scienze sono Filosofia appellate. 18. Poi che è veduto come la primaia e vera filosofia è in suo essere - la quale è quella donna di cu' io dico - e come lo suo nobile nome per consuetudine è comunicato a le scienze, procederò oltre con le sue lode.

CAPITOLO XII

1. Nel primo capitolo di questo trattato è sì compiutamente ragionata la cagione che mosse me a questa canzone, che non è più mestiere di ragionare; chè assai leggermente a questa esposizione ch'è detta ella si può riducere. E però secondo le divisioni fatte la litterale sentenza transcorrerò, per questa volgendo lo senso de la lettera là dove sarà mestiere. 2. Dico: Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona. Per Amore intendo lo studio lo quale io mettea per acquistare l'amore di questa donna: ove si vuole sapere che studio si può qui doppiamente considerare. È uno studio lo quale mena l'uomo a l'abito de l'arte e de la scienza; e un altro studio lo quale ne l'abito acquistato adopera, usando quello. 3. E questo primo è quello ch'io chiamo qui Amore, lo quale ne la mia mente informava continue, nuove e altissime considerazioni di questa donna che di sopra è dimostrata: sì come suole fare lo studio che si mette in acquistare un'amistade, che di quella amistade grandi cose prima considera, desiderando quella. 4. Questo è quello studio e quella affezione che suole procedere ne li uomini la generazione de l'amistade, quando già da una parte è nato amore, e desiderasi e procurasi che sia da l'altra; chè, sì come di sopra si dice, Filosofia è quando l'anima e la sapienza sono fatte amiche, sì che l'una sia tutta amata da l'altra, per lo modo che detto è di sopra. 5. Nè più è mestiere di ragionare per la presente esposizione questo primo verso, che [per] proemio fu ne la litterale ragionato, però che per la prima sua ragione assai di leggiero a questa seconda si può volgere lo 'ntendimento. 6. Onde al secondo verso, lo quale è cominciatore del trattato, è da procedere, là ove io dico: Non vede il sol, che tutto 'l mondo gira. Qui è da sapere che sì come trattando di sensibile cosa per cosa insensibile, si tratta convenevolemente, così di cosa intelligibile per cosa inintelligibile trattare si conviene. E però sì come ne la litterale si parlava cominciando dal sole corporale e sensibile, così ora è da ragionare per lo sole spirituale e intelligibile, che è Iddio. 7. Nullo sensibile in tutto lo mondo è più degno di farsi essemplo di Dio che 'l sole. Lo quale di sensibile luce sè prima e poi tutte le corpora celestiali e le elementali allumina: così Dio prima sè con luce intellettuale allumina, e poi le [creature] celestiali e l'altre intelligibili. 8. Lo sole tutte le cose col suo calore vivifica, e se alcuna ne corrompe, non è de la 'ntenzione de la cagione, ma è accidentale effetto: così Iddio tutte le cose vivifica in bontade, e se alcuna n'è rea, non è de la divina intenzione, ma conviene quello per accidente essere [ne] lo processo de lo inteso effetto. 9. Che se Iddio fece li angeli buoni e li rei, non fece l'uno e l'altro per intenzione, ma solamente li buoni. Seguitò poi fuori d'intenzione la malizia de' rei, ma non sì fuori d'intenzione, che Dio non sapesse dinanzi in sè predire la

loro malizia; ma tanta fu l'affezione a producere la creatura spirituale, che la prescienza d'alquanti che a malo fine doveano venire non dovea nè potea Iddio da quella produzione rimuovere. 10. Chè non sarebbe da laudare la Natura se, sappiendo prima che li fiori d'un'arbore in certa parte perdere si dovessero, non producesse in quella fiori, e per li vani abbandonasse la produzione de li fruttiferi. 11. Dico adunque che Iddio, che tutto intende (chè suo 'girare' è suo 'intendere'), non vede tanto gentil cosa quanto elli vede quando mira là dove è questa Filosofia. Chè avvegna che Dio, esso medesimo mirando, veggia insiememente tutto; in quanto la distinzione de le cose è in lui per [lo] modo che lo effetto è ne la cagione, vede quelle distinte. 12. Vede adunque questa nobilissima di tutte assolutamente, in quanto perfettissimamente in sè la vede e in sua essenzia. Chè se a memoria si reduce ciò che detto è di sopra, filosofia è uno amoroso uso di sapienza, lo quale massimamente è in Dio, però che in lui è somma sapienza e sommo amore e sommo atto; che non può essere altrove, se non in quanto da esso procede. 13. È adunque la divina filosofia de la divina essenza, però che in esso non può essere cosa a la sua essenzia aggiunta; ed è nobilissima, però che nobilissima è la essenzia divina; ed è in lui per modo perfetto e vero, quasi per etterno matrimonio. Ne l'altre intelligenze è per modo minore, quasi come druda de la quale nullo amadore prende compiuta gioia, ma nel suo aspetto contentan la loro vaghezza. 14. Per che dire si può che Dio non vede, cioè non intende, cosa alcuna tanto gentile quanto questa: dico cosa alcuna, in quanto l'altre cose vede e distingue, come detto è, veggendosi essere cagione di tutto. Oh nobilissimo ed eccellentissimo cuore che ne la sposa de lo Imperadore del cielo s'intende, e non solamente sposa, ma suora e figlia dilettissima!

CAPITOLO XIII

1. Veduto come, nel principio de le laude di costei, sottilmente si dice essa essere de la divina sustanza, in quanto primieramente si considera, da procedere e da vedere è come secondamente dico essa essere ne le causate intelligenze. 2. Dico adunque: Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira: dove è da sapere che ‘di là su’ dico, facendo relazione a Dio che dinanzi è menzionato; e per questo escludo le Intelligenze che sono in essilio de la superna patria, le quali filosofare non possono, però che amore in loro è del tutto spento, e a filosofare, come già detto è, è necessario amore. Per che si vede che le infernali Intelligenze da lo aspetto di questa bellissima sono private. E però che essa è beatitudine de lo ‘ntelletto, la sua privazione è amarissima e piena d’ogni tristizia. 3. Poi quando dico: E quella gente che qui s’innamora, discendo a mostrare come ne l’umana intelligenza essa secondariamente ancora vegna; de la quale filosofia umana seguito poi per lo trattato, essa commendando. Dico adunque che la gente che s’innamora ‘qui’, cioè in questa vita, la sente nel suo pensiero, non sempre, ma quando Amore fa de la sua pace sentire. Dove sono da vedere tre cose che in questo testo sono toccate. 4. La prima si è quando si dice: la gente che qui s’innamora, per che pare farsi distinzione ne l’umana generazione. E di necessitate far si conviene, chè, secondo che manifestamente appare, e nel seguente trattato per intenzione si ragionerà, grandissima parte de li uomini vivono più secondo lo senso che secondo ragione; e quelli che secondo lo senso vivono di questa innamorare è impossibile, però che di lei avere non possono alcuna apprensione. 5. La seconda si è quando dice: Quando Amor fa sentire, dove si par fare distinzione di tempo. La qual cosa anco [far si conviene, chè,] avvegna che le intelligenze separate questa donna mirino continuamente, la umana intelligenza ciò fare non può; però che l’umana natura - fuori de la speculazione, de la quale s’appaga lo ‘ntelletto e la ragione - abbisogna di molte cose a suo sustentamento: per che la nostra sapienza è talvolta abituale solamente, e non attuale, che non incontra ciò ne l’altre intelligenze, che solo di natura intellettiva sono perfette. 6. Onde quando l’anima nostra non hae atto di speculazione, non si può dire veramente che sia in filosofia, se non in quanto ha l’abito di quella e la potenza di poter lei svegliare; e però tal volta è con quella gente che qui s’innamora, e tal volta no. 7. La terza è quando dice l’ora che quella gente è con essa, cioè quando Amore de la sua pace fa sentire; che non vuole altro dire se non quando l’uomo è in ispeculazione attuale, però che de la pace di questa donna non fa lo studio [sentire] se non ne l’atto de la speculazione. E così si vede come questa è donna primamente di Dio e secondariamente de l’altre intelligenze separate, per continuo sguardare; e

appresso de l’umana intelligenza per riguardare discontinuato. 8. Veramente, sempre è l’uomo che ha costei per donna da chiamare filosofo, non ostante che tuttavia non sia ne l’ultimo atto di filosofia, però che da l’abito maggiormente è altri da denominare. Onde dicemo alcuno virtuoso, non solamente virtute operando, ma l’abito de la virtù avendo; e dicemo l’uomo facundo eziandio non parlando, per l’abito de la facundia, cioè del bene parlare. E di questa filosofia in quanto da l’umana intelligenza è participata, saranno omai le seguenti commendazioni, a mostrare come grande parte del suo bene a l’umana natura è conceduto. 9. Dico dunque appresso: ‘Suo essere piace tanto a chi liele dà’ (dal quale, sì come da fonte primo, si diriva), ‘che [in lei la sua virtute infonde] sempre, oltra la capacitade de la nostra natura’, la quale fa bella e virtuosa. Onde, avvegna che a l’abito di quella per alquanti si vegna, non vi si viene sì per alcuno, che propriamente abito dire si possa; però che ‘l primo studio, cioè quello per lo quale l’abito si genera, non puote quella perfettamente acquistare. 10. E qui si vede s’umil è sua loda; che, perfetta e imperfetta, nome di perfezione non perde. E per questa sua dismisuranza si dice che l’anima de la filosofia lo manifesta in quel ch’ella conduce, cioè che Iddio mette sempre in lei del suo lume. Dove si vuole a memoria reducere che di sopra è detto che amore è forma di Filosofia, e però qui si chiama anima di lei. 11. Lo quale amore manifesto è nel viso de la Sapienza, ne lo quale esso conduce mirabili bellezze, cioè contentamento in ciascuna condizione di tempo e dispregiamento di quelle cose che li altri fanno loro signori. Per che avviene che li altri miseri che ciò mirano, ripensando lo loro difetto, dopo lo desiderio de la perfezione caggiono in fatica di sospiri; e questo è quello che dice: Che li occhi di color dov’ella luce Ne mandan messi al cor pien di desiri, Che prendon aire e diventan sospiri.

CAPITOLO XIV

1. Sì come ne la litterale esposizione dopo le generali laude a le speziali si discende, prima da la parte de l'anima, poi da la parte del corpo, così ora intende lo testo, dopo le generali commendazioni, a speziali discendere. Sì come detto è di sopra, Filosofia per subietto materiale qui ha la sapienza, e per forma ha amore, e per composto de l'uno e de l'altro l'uso di speculazione. 2. Onde in questo verso che seguentemente comincia: In lei discende la virtù divina, io intendo commendare l'amore, che è parte de la filosofia. Ove è da sapere che discender la virtude d'una cosa in altra non è altro che ridurre quella in sua similitudine; sì come ne li agenti naturali vedemo manifestamente che, discendendo la loro virtù ne le pazienti cose, recano quelle a loro similitudine tanto quanto possibili sono a venire. 3. Onde vedemo lo sole che, discendendo lo raggio suo qua giù, reduce le cose a sua similitudine di lume, quanto esse per loro disposizione possono da la [sua] virtude lume ricevere. Così dico che Dio questo amore a sua similitudine reduce, quanto esso è possibile a lui assimigliarsi. E ponsi la qualitade de la reduzione, dicendo: Sì come face in angelo che 'l vede. 4. Ove ancora è da sapere che lo primo agente, cioè Dio, pinge la sua virtù in cose per modo di diritto raggio, e in cose per modo di splendore reverberato; onde ne le Intelligenze raggia la divina luce sanza mezzo, ne l'altre si ripercuote da queste Intelligenze prima illuminate. 5. Ma però che qui è fatta menzione di luce e di splendore, a perfetto intendimento mostrerò differenza di questi vocabuli, secondo che Avicenna sente. Dico che l'usanza de' filosofi è di chiamare 'luce' lo lume, in quanto esso è nel suo fontale principio; di chiamare 'raggio', in quanto esso è per lo mezzo, dal principio al primo corpo dove si termina; di chiamare 'splendore', in quanto esso è in altra parte alluminata ripercosso. 6. Dico adunque che la divina virtù sanza mezzo questo amore tragge a sua similitudine. E ciò si può fare manifesto massimamente in ciò, che sì come lo divino amore è tutto etterno, così conviene che sia etterno lo suo obietto di necessitate, sì che etterne cose siano quelle che esso ama; e così face a questo amore amare; chè la sapienza, ne la quale questo amore fere, etterna è. 7. Ond'è scritto di lei: «Dal principio dinanzi da li secoli creata sono, e nel secolo che dee venire non verrò meno»; e ne li Proverbi di Salomone essa Sapienza dice: «Etternalmente ordinata sono»; e nel principio di Giovanni, ne l'Evangelio, si può la sua etternitade apertamente notare. E quinci nasce che là dovunque questo amore splende, tutti li altri amori si fanno oscuri e quasi spenti, imperò che lo suo obietto etterno improporzionalmente li altri obietti vince e soperchia. 8. Per che li filosofi eccellentissimi ne li loro atti apertamente lo ne

dimostraro, per li quali sapemo essi tutte l'altre cose, fuori che la sapienza, avere messe a non calere. Onde Democrito, de la propria persona non curando, nè barba nè capelli nè unghie si togliea; Platone, de li beni temporali non curando, la reale dignitade mise a non calere, che figlio di re fue; Aristotile, d'altro amico non curando, contra lo suo migliore amico, fuori di quella, combatteo, sì come contra lo nomato Platone. E perchè di questi parliamo, quando troviamo li altri che per questi pensieri la loro vita disprezzaro, sì come Zeno, Socrate, Seneca, e molti altri? 9. E però è manifesto che la divina virtù, a guisa [che in] angelo, in questo amore ne li uomini discende. E per dare esperienza di ciò, grida sussequentemente lo testo: E qual donna gentil questo non crede, Vada con lei e miri. Per donna gentile s'intende la nobile anima d'ingegno e libera ne la sua propia potestate, che è la ragione. 10. Onde l'altre anime dire non si possono donne, ma ancille, però che non per loro sono ma per altrui; e lo Filosofo dice, nel secondo de la Metafisica, che quella cosa è libera che per sua cagione è, non per altrui. 11. Dice: Vada con lei e miri li atti sui, cioè accompagnisi di questo amore, e guardi a quello che dentro da lui troverà. E in parte ne tocca, dicendo: Quivi dov'ella parla, si dichina, cioè, dove la filosofia è in atto, si dichina un celestial pensiero, nel quale si ragiona questa essere più che umana operazione: e dice 'del cielo' a dare a intendere che non solamente essa, ma li pensieri amici di quella sono astratti da le basse e terrene cose. 12. Poi sussequentemente dice com'ell'avvalora e accende amore dovunque ella si mostra, con la suavitade de li atti, chè sono tutti li suoi sembianti onesti, dolci e sanza soverchio alcuno. E sussequentemente, a maggiore persuasione de la sua compagnia fare, dice: Gentile è in donna ciò che in lei si trova, E bello è tanto quanto lei simiglia. 13. Ancora soggiugne: E puossi dir che 'l suo aspetto giova: dove è da sapere che lo sguardo di questa donna fu a noi così largamente ordinato, non pur per la faccia che ella ne dimostra vedere, ma per le cose che ne tiene celate desiderare ed acquistare. 14. Onde, sì come per lei molto di quello si vede per ragione, e per consequente essere per ragione, che sanza lei pare maraviglia, così per lei si crede [ch']ogni miracolo in più alto intelletto puote avere ragione, e per consequente può essere. Onde la nostra buona fede ha sua origine; da la quale viene la speranza, de lo proveduto desiderare; e per quella nasce l'operazione de la caritade. 15. Per le quali tre virtudi si sale a filosofare a quelle Atene celestiali, dove gli Stoici e Peripatetici e Epicurii, per la l[uc]e de la veritade etterna, in uno volere concordevolmente concorrono.

CAPITOLO XV

1. Ne lo precedente capitolo questa gloriosa donna è commendata secondo l'una de le sue parti componenti, cioè amore. Ora in questo, ne lo quale io intendo esponere quel verso che comincia: Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto, si conviene trattare commendando l'altra parte sua, cioè sapienza. 2. Dice adunque lo testo 'che ne la faccia di costei appariscono cose che mostrano de' piaceri di Paradiso'; e distingue lo loco dove ciò appare, cioè ne li occhi e ne lo riso. E qui si conviene sapere che li occhi de la Sapienza sono le sue demonstrazioni, con le quali si vede la veritade certissimamente; e lo suo riso sono le sue persuasioni, ne le quali si dimostra la luce interiore de la Sapienza sotto alcuno velamento: e in queste due cose si sente quel piacere altissimo di beatitudine, lo quale è massimo bene in Paradiso. 3. Questo piacere in altra cosa di qua giù essere non può, se non nel guardare in questi occhi e in questo riso. E la ragione è questa: che, con ciò sia cosa che ciascuna cosa naturalmente disia la sua perfezione, sanza quella essere non può [l'uomo] contento, che è essere beato; chè quantunque l'altre cose avesse, sanza questa rimarrebbe in lui desiderio; lo quale essere non può con la beatitudine, acciò che la beatitudine sia perfetta cosa e lo desiderio sia cosa defettiva; chè nullo desidera quello che ha, ma quello che non ha, che è manifesto difetto. 4. E in questo sguardo solamente l'umana perfezione s'acquista, cioè la perfezione de la ragione, de la quale, sì come di principalissima parte, tutta la nostra essenza depende; e tutte l'altre nostre operazioni - sentire, nutrire, e tutto - sono per quella sola, e questa è per sè, e non per altri; sì che, perfetta sia questa, perfetta è quella, tanto cioè che l'uomo, in quanto ello è uomo, vede terminato ogni desiderio, e così è beato. 5. E però si dice nel libro di Sapienza: «Chi gitta via la sapienza e la dottrina, è infelice»: che è privazione de l'essere felice. Per l'abito de la sapienza seguita che s'acquista e[ssere] felice - [che] è essere contento - secondo la sentenza del Filosofo. Dunque si vede come ne l'aspetto di costei de le cose di Paradiso appaiono. E però si legge nel libro allegato di Sapienza, di lei parlando: «Essa è candore de la etterna luce e specchio sanza macula de la maestà di Dio». 6. Poi, quando si dice: Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto, escuso me di ciò, che poco parlar posso di quelle, per la loro soperchianza. Dov'è da sapere che in alcuno modo queste cose nostro intelletto abbagliano, in quanto certe cose [si] affermano essere che lo intelletto nostro guardare non può, cioè Dio e la etternitate e la prima materia; che certissimamente si veggiono, e con tutta fede si credono essere, e per quello che sono intendere noi non potemo; [e nullo] se non cose negando si può appressare a la sua conoscenza, e non altrimenti. 7. Veramente può qui alcuno

forte dubitare come ciò sia, che la sapienza possa fare l'uomo beato, non potendo a lui perfettamente certe cose mostrare; con ciò sia cosa che 'l naturale desiderio sia a l'uomo di sapere, e sanza compiere lo desiderio beato essere non possa. 8. A ciò si può chiaramente rispondere che lo desiderio naturale in ciascuna cosa è misurato secondo la possibilitade de la cosa desiderante: altrimenti andrebbe in contrario di se medesimo, che impossibile è; e la Natura l'avrebbe fatto indarno, che è anche impossibile. 9. In contrario andrebbe: chè, desiderando la sua perfezione, desiderrebbe la sua imperfezione; imperò che desiderrebbe sè sempre desiderare e non compiere mai suo desiderio (e in questo errore cade l'avaro maladetto, e non s'accorge che desidera sè sempre desiderare, andando dietro al numero impossibile a giungere). Avrebbelo anco la Natura fatto indarno, però che non sarebbe ad alcuno fine ordinato. E però l'umano desiderio è misurato in questa vita a quella scienza che qui avere si può, e quello punto non passa se non per errore, lo quale è di fuori di naturale intenzione. 10. E così è misurato ne la natura angelica, e terminato in quanto [a] quella sapienza che la natura di ciascuno può apprendere. E questa è la ragione per che li Santi non hanno tra loro invidia, però che ciascuno aggiugne lo fine del suo desiderio, lo quale desiderio è con la bontà de la natura misurato. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che conoscere di Dio e di certe altre cose quello esse sono non sia possibile a la nostra natura, quello da noi naturalmente non è desiderato di sapere. E per questo è la dubitazione soluta. 11. Poi quando dice: Sua bieltà piove fiammelle di foco, discende ad un altro piacere di Paradiso, cioè de la felicitade secondaria a questa prima, la quale de la sua biltade procede. Dove è da sapere che la moralitade è bellezza de la filosofia; chè così come la bellezza del corpo resulta da le membra in quanto sono debitamente ordinate, così la bellezza de la sapienza, che è corpo di Filosofia come detto è, resulta da l'ordine de le virtudi morali, che fanno quella piacere sensibilmente. 12. E però dico che sua biltà, cioè moralitade, piove fiammelle di foco, cioè appetito diritto, che s'ingenera nel piacere de la morale dottrina: lo quale appetito ne diparte eziandio da li vizii naturali, non che da li altri. E quinci nasce quella felicitade, la quale diffinisce Aristotile nel primo de l'Etica, dicendo che è operazione secondo vertù in vita perfetta. 13. E quando dice: Però qual donna sente sua bieltate, procede in loda di costei, gridando a la gente che la seguiti dicendo loro lo suo beneficio, cioè che per seguitare lei diviene ciascuno buono. Però dice: qual donna, cioè quale anima, sente sua biltate biasimare per non parere quale parere si conviene, miri in questo essemplo. 14. Ove è da sapere che li costumi sono beltà de l'anima, cioè le vertudi massimamente, le quali tal volta per vanitadi o per superbia si fanno men belle e men gradite, sì come ne l'ultimo trattato vedere si potrà. E però dico che, a fuggire questo, si guardi in costei, cioè colà dov'ella è

essemplo d’umiltà; cioè in quella parte di sè che morale filosofia si chiama. E soggiungo che, mirando costei - dico la sapienza - in questa parte, ogni viziato tornerà diritto e buono; e però dico: Questa è colei ch’umilia ogni perverso, cioè volge dolcemente chi fuori di debito ordine è piegato. 15. Ultimamente, in massima laude di sapienza, dico lei essere di tutto madre [e di moto] qualunque principio, dicendo che con lei Iddio cominciò lo mondo e spezialmente lo movimento del cielo, lo quale tutte le cose genera e dal quale ogni movimento è principiato e mosso, dicendo: Costei pensò chi mosse l’universo. Ciò è a dire che nel divino pensiero, ch’è esso intelletto, essa era quando lo mondo fece; onde seguita che ella lo facesse. 16. E però disse Salomone in quello de’ Proverbi in persona de la Sapienza: «Quando Iddio apparecchiava li cieli, io era presente; quando con certa legge e con certo giro vallava li abissi, quando suso fermava [l’etera] e suspendeva le fonti de l’acque, quando circuiva lo suo termine al mare e poneva legge a l’acque che non passassero li suoi confini, quando elli appendeva li fondamenti de la terra, con lui e io era, disponente tutte le cose, e dilettavami per ciascuno die». 17. O peggio che morti che l’amistà di costei fuggite, aprite li occhi vostri e mirate: che, innanzi che voi foste, ella fu amatrice di voi, acconciando e ordinando lo vostro processo; e, poi che fatti foste, per voi dirizzare, in vostra similitudine venne a voi. 18. E se tutti al suo conspetto venire non potete, onorate lei ne’ suoi amici e seguite li comandamenti loro, sì come [quelli] che nunziano la volontà di questa etternale imperadrice - non chiudete li orecchi a Salomone che ciò vi dice, dicendo che la ‘via de’ giusti è quasi luce splendiente, che procede e cresce infino al die de la beatitudine’ -; andando loro dietro, mirando le loro operazioni, che essere debbono a voi luce nel cammino di questa brevissima vita. 19. E qui si può terminare la vera sentenza de la presente canzone. Veramente l’ultimo verso, che per tornata è posto, per la litterale esposizione assai leggermente qua si può ridurre, salvo in tanto quanto dice che io [s]ì chiamai questa donna fera e disdegnosa. Dove è da sapere che dal principio essa filosofia pareva a me, quanto da la parte del suo corpo, cioè sapienza, fiera, chè non mi ridea, in quanto le sue persuasioni ancora non intendea; e disdegnosa, chè non mi volgea l’occhio, cioè ch’io non potea vedere le sue dimostrazioni: e di tutto questo lo difetto era dal mio lato. 20. E per questo, e per quello che ne la sentenza litterale è dato, è manifesta l’allegoria de la tornata; sì che tempo è, per più oltre procedere, di porre fine a questo trattato.

TRATTATO QUARTO

CANZONE TERZA

Le dolci rime d’amor ch’i’ solia
cercar ne’ miei pensieri,
convien ch’io lasci; non perch’io non speri
ad esse ritornare,
ma perchè li atti disdegnosi e feri
che ne la donna mia
sono appariti m’han chiusa la via
de l’usato parlare.
E poi che tempo mi par d’aspettare,
diporrò giù lo mio soave stile,
ch’i’ ho tenuto nel trattar d’amore;
e dirò del valore,
per lo qual veramente omo è gentile,
con rima aspr’e sottile;
riprovando ‘l giudicio falso e vile
di quei che voglion che di gentilezza
sia principio ricchezza.
E, cominciando, chiamo quel signore
ch’a la mia donna ne li occhi dimora,
per ch’ella di se stessa s’innamora.

Tale imperò che gentilezza volse,
secondo ‘l suo parere,
che fosse antica possession d’avere
con reggimenti belli;
e altri fu di più lieve savere,
che tal detto rivolse,
e l’ultima particula ne tolse,
chè non l’avea fors’elli!
Di retro da costui van tutti quelli
che fan gentile per ischiatta altrui
che lungiamente in gran ricchezza è stata;
ed è tanto durata
la così falsa oppinion tra nui,
che l’uom chiama colui
omo gentil che può dicere: ‘Io fui

nepote, o figlio, di cotal valente’,
benchè sia da niente.
Ma vilissimo sembra, a chi ‘l ver guata,
cui è scorto ‘l cammino e poscia l’erra,
e tocca a tal, ch’è morto e va per terra!

Chi diffinisce: ‘Omo è legno animato’,
prima dice non vero,
e, dopo ‘l falso, parla non intero;
ma più forse non vede.
Similemente fu chi tenne impero
in diffinire errato,
chè prima puose ‘l falso e, d’altro lato,
con difetto procede;
chè le divizie, sì come si crede,
non posson gentilezza dar nè torre,
però che vili son da lor natura:
poi chi pinge figura,
se non può esser lei, non la può porre,
nè la diritta torre
fa piegar rivo che da lungi corre.
Che siano vili appare ed imperfette,
chè, quantunque collette,
non posson quietar, ma dan più cura;
onde l’animo ch’è dritto e verace
per lor discorrimento non si sface.

Nè voglion che vil uom gentil divegna,
nè di vil padre scenda
nazion che per gentil già mai s’intenda;
questo è da lor confesso:
onde lor ragion par che sè offenda
in tanto quanto assegna
che tempo a gentilezza si convegna,
diffinendo con esso.
Ancor, segue di ciò che innanzi ho messo,
che siam tutti gentili o ver villani,
o che non fosse ad uom cominciamento;
ma ciò io non consento,

ned ellino altressì, se son cristiani!
Per che a ‘ntelletti sani
è manifesto i lor diri esser vani,
ed io così per falsi li riprovo,
e da lor mi rimovo;
e dicer voglio omai, sì com’io sento,
che cosa è gentilezza, e da che vene,
e dirò i segni che ‘l gentile uom tene.

Dico ch’ogni vertù principalmente
vien da una radice:
vertute, dico, che fa l’uom felice
in sua operazione.
Questo è, secondo che l’Etica dice,
un abito eligente
lo qual dimora in mezzo solamente,
e tai parole pone.
Dico che nobiltate in sua ragione
importa sempre ben del suo subietto,
come viltate importa sempre male;
e vertute cotale
dà sempre altrui di sè buono intelletto;
per che in medesmo detto
convegnono ambedue, ch’en d’uno effetto.
Onde convien da l’altra vegna l’una,
o d’un terzo ciascuna;
ma se l’una val ciò che l’altra vale,
e ancor più, da lei verrà più tosto.
E ciò ch’io dett’ho qui sia per supposto.

È gentilezza dovunqu’è vertute,
ma non vertute ov’ella;
sì com’è ‘l cielo dovunqu’è la stella,
ma ciò non e converso.
E noi in donna e in età novella
vedem questa salute,
in quanto vergognose son tenute,
ch’è da vertù diverso.
Dunque verrà, come dal nero il perso,

ciascheduna vertute da costei,
o vero il gener lor, ch'io misi avanti.
Però nessun si vanti
dicendo: 'Per ischiatta io son con lei',
ch'elli son quasi dei
quei c'han tal grazia fuor di tutti rei;
chè solo Iddio a l'anima la dona
che vede in sua persona
perfettamente star: sì ch'ad alquanti
che seme di felicità sia costa,
messo da Dio ne l'anima ben posta.

L'anima cui adorna esta bontate
non la si tiene ascosa,
chè dal principio ch'al corpo si sposa
la mostra infin la morte.
Ubidente, soave e vergognosa
è ne la prima etate,
e sua persona adorna di bieltate
con le sue parti accorte;
in giovinezza, temperata e forte,
piena d'amore e di cortese lode,
e solo in lealtà far si diletta;
è ne la sua senetta
prudente e giusta, e larghezza se n'ode,
e 'n se medesma gode
d'udire e ragionar de l'altrui prode;
poi ne la quarta parte de la vita
a Dio si rimarita,
contemplando la fine che l'aspetta,
e benedice li tempi passati.
Vedete omai quanti son l'ingannati!

Contra-li-erranti mia, tu te n'andrai;
e quando tu sarai
in parte dove sia la donna nostra,
non le tenere il tuo mestier coverto
tu le puoi dir per certo:
«Io vo parlando de l'amica vostra».

CAPITOLO I

1. Amore, secondo la concordevole sentenza de li savi di lui ragionanti, e secondo quello che per esperienza continuamente vedemo, è che congiunge e unisce l'amante con la persona amata; onde Pittagora dice: «Ne l'amistà si fa uno di più». 2. E però che le cose congiunte comunicano naturalmente intra sè le loro qualitadi, in tanto che talvolta è che l'una torna del tutto ne la natura de l'altra, incontra che le passioni de la persona amata entrano ne la persona amante, sì che l'amore de l'una si comunica ne l'altra, e così l'odio e lo desiderio e ogni altra passione. Per che li amici de l'uno sono da l'altro amati, e li nemici odiati; per che in greco proverbio è detto: «De li amici essere deono tutte le cose comuni». 3. Onde io, fatto amico di questa donna, di sopra ne la verace esposizione nominata, cominciai ad amare e odiare secondo l'amore e l'odio suo. Cominciai adunque ad amare li seguitatori de la veritade e odiare li seguitatori de lo errore e de la falsitade, com'ella face. 4. Ma però che ciascuna cosa per sè è da amare, e nulla è da odiare se non per sopravenimento di malizia, ragionevole e onesto è, non le cose, ma le malizie de le cose odiare e procurare da esse di partire. E a ciò s'alcuna persona intende, la mia eccellentissima donna intende massimamente: a partire, dico, la malizia de le cose, la qual cagione è d'odio; però che in lei è tutta ragione e in lei è fontalemente l'onestade. 5. Io, lei seguitando ne l'opera sì come ne la passione quanto potea, li errori de la gente abominava e dispregiava, non per infamia o vituperio de li erranti, ma de li errori; li quali biasimando credea far dispiacere, e, dispiaciuti, partire da coloro che per essi eran da me odiati. 6. Intra li quali errori uno io massimamente riprendea, lo quale non solamente è dannoso e pericoloso a coloro che in esso stanno, ma eziandio a li altri, che lui riprendano, porta dolore e danno. 7. Questo è l'errore de l'umana bontade in quanto in noi è da la natura seminata e che 'nobilitade' chiamare si dee; che per mala consuetudine e per poco intelletto era tanto fortificato, che [l']oppinione, quasi di tutti, n'era falsificata; e de la falsa oppinione nascevano li falsi giudicii, e de' falsi giudicii nascevano le non giuste reverenze e vilipensioni; per che li buoni erano in villano dispetto tenuti, e li malvagi onorati ed essaltati. La qual cosa era pessima confusione del mondo; sì come veder puote chi mira quello che di ciò può seguitare, sottilmente. 8. Per che, con ciò fosse cosa che questa mia donna un poco li suoi dolci sembianti transmutasse a me, massimamente in quelle parti dove io mirava e cercava se la prima materia de li elementi era da Dio intesa, - per la qual cosa un poco dal frequentare lo suo aspetto mi sostenni -, quasi ne la sua assenzia dimorando, entrai a riguardare col pensiero lo difetto umano intorno al detto errore. 9. E per

fuggire oziositade, che massimamente di questa donna è nemica, e per istinguere questo errore, che tanti amici le toglie, proposi di gridare a la gente che per mal cammino andavano, acciò che per diritto calle si dirizzassero; e cominciai una canzone nel cui principio dissi: Le dolci rime d'amor ch'i' solia. Ne la quale io intendo riducer la gente in diritta via sopra la propia conoscenza de la verace nobilitade; sì come per la conoscenza del suo testo, a la esposizione del quale ora s'intende, vedere si potrà. 10. E però che in questa canzone s'intese a rimedio così necessario, non era buono sotto alcuna figura parlare, ma conveniesi per via tostana questa medicina, acciò che fosse tostana la sanitade; la quale corrotta, a così laida morte si correa. 11. Non sarà dunque mestiere ne la esposizione di costei alcuna allegoria aprire, ma solamente la sentenza secondo la lettera ragionare. Per mia donna intendo sempre quella che ne la precedente ragione è ragionata, cioè quella luce virtuosissima, Filosofia, li cui raggi fanno ne li fiori rifronzire e fruttificare la verace de li uomini nobilitade, de la quale trattare la proposta canzone pienamente intende.

CAPITOLO II

1. Nel principio de la impresa esposizione, per meglio dare a intendere la sentenza de la proposta canzone, conviensi quella partire prima in due parti, che ne la prima parte pr[oemi]almente si parla, ne la seconda si seguita lo trattato; e comincia la seconda parte nel cominciamento del secondo verso, dove dice: Tale imperò che gentilezza volse. 2. La prima parte ancora in tre membra si può comprendere: nel primo si dice perchè da lo parlare usato mi parto; nel secondo dico quello che è di mia intenzione a trattare; nel terzo domando aiutorio a quella cosa che più aiutare mi può, cioè a la veritade. Lo secondo membro comincia: E poi che tempo mi par d'aspettare. Lo terzo comincia: E, cominciando, chiamo quel signore. 3. Dico adunque che 'a me conviene lasciare le dolci rime d'amore le quali solieno cercare li miei pensieri'; e la cagione assegno, perchè dico che ciò non è per intendimento di più non rimare d'amore, ma però che ne la donna mia nuovi sembianti sono appariti li quali m'hanno tolto materia di dire al presente d'amore. 4. Ov'è da sapere che non si dice qui li atti di questa donna essere 'disdegnosi e fieri' se non secondo l'apparenza; sì come nel decimo capitolo del precedente trattato si può vedere come altra volta dico che l'apparenza de la veritade si discordava. E come ciò può essere, che una medesima cosa sia dolce e paia amara, o vero sia chiara e paia oscura, qui[vi] sufficientemente vedere si può. 5. Appresso, quando dico: E poi che tempo mi par d'aspettare, dico, sì come detto è, questo che trattare intendo. E qui non è da trapassare con piede secco ciò che si dice in 'tempo aspettare', imperò che potentissima cagione è de la mia mossa; ma da vedere è come ragionevolemente quel tempo in tutte le nostre operazioni si dee attendere, e massimamente nel parlare. 6. Lo tempo, secondo che dice Aristotile nel quarto de la Fisica, è «numero di movimento, secondo prima e poi»; e «numero di movimento celestiale», lo quale dispone le cose di qua giù diversamente a ricevere alcuna informazione. 7. Chè altrimenti è disposta la terra nel principio de la primavera a ricevere in sé la informazione de l'erbe e de li fiori, e altrimenti lo verno; e altrimenti è disposta una stagione a ricevere lo seme che un'altra; e così la nostra mente in quanto ella è fondata sopra la complessione del corpo, che a seguitare la circulazione del cielo altrimenti è disposto un tempo e altrimenti un altro. 8. Per che le parole, che sono quasi seme d'operazione, si deono molto discretamente sostenere e lasciare, [sì] perchè bene siano ricevute e fruttifere vegnano, sì perchè da la loro parte non sia difetto di sterilitade. E però lo tempo è da provedere, sì per colui che parla come per colui che dee udire: chè se 'l parladore è mal disposto, più volte sono le sue parole dannose; e se l'uditore è

mal disposto, mal sono quelle ricevute che buone siano. E però Salomone dice ne lo Ecclesiaste: «Tempo è da parlare, e tempo è da tacere». 9. Per che io sentendo in me turbata disposizione, per la cagione che detta è nel precedente capitolo, a parlare d'Amore, parve a me che fosse d'aspettare tempo, lo quale seco porta lo fine d'ogni desiderio, e appresenta, quasi come donatore, a coloro a cui non increscе d'aspettare. 10. Onde dice santo Iacopo apostolo ne la sua Pistola: «Ecco lo agricola aspetta lo prezioso frutto de la terra, pazientemente sostenendo infino che riceva lo temporaneo e lo serotino». E tutte le nostre brighe, se bene veniamo a cercare li loro principii, procedono quasi dal non conoscere l'uso del tempo. 11. Dico: 'poi che da aspettare mi pare, diporroe', cioè lascierò stare, 'lo mio stilo', cioè modo, 'soave' che d'Amore parlando hoe tenuto; e dico di dicere di quello 'valore' per lo quale uomo è gentile veracemente. E avvegna che 'valore' intendere si possa per più modi, qui si prende 'valore' quasi potenza di natura, o vero bontade da quella data, sì come di sotto si vedrà. 12. E prometto di trattare di questa materia con rima aspr'e sottile. Per che sapere si conviene che 'rima' si può doppiamente considerare, cioè largamente e strettamente: stretta[mente], s'intende pur per quella concordanza che ne l'ultima e penultima sillaba far si suole; quando largamente, s'intende per tutto quel parlare che 'n numeri e tempo regolato in rimate consonanze cade, e così qui in questo proemio prendere e intendere si vuole. 13. E però dice aspra quanto al suono de lo dittato, che a tanta materia non conviene essere leno; e dice sottile quanto a la sentenza de le parole, che sottilmente argomentando e disputando procedono. 14. E soggiungo: Riprovando 'l giudicio falso e vile, ove si promette ancora di riprovare lo giudicio de la gente piena d'errore; falso, cioè rimosso da la veritade, e vile, cioè da viltà d'animo affermato e fortificato. 15. Ed è da guardare a ciò, che in questo proemio prima si promette di trattare lo vero, e poi di riprovare lo falso, e nel trattato si fa l'opposito; chè prima si ripruova lo falso, e poi si tratta lo vero: che pare non convenire a la promessione. Però è da sapere che tutto che a l'uno e a l'altro s'intenda, al trattare lo vero s'intende principalmente; a riprovare lo falso s'intende in tanto in quanto la veritade meglio si fa apparire. 16. E qui prima si promette lo trattare del vero, sì come principale intento, lo quale a l'anima de li auditori porta desiderio d'udire: nel trattato prima si ripruova lo falso, acciò che, fugate le male oppinioni, la veritade poi più liberamente sia ricevuta. E questo modo tenne lo maestro de l'umana ragione, Aristotile, che sempre prima combatteo con li avversari de la veritade e poi, quelli convinti, la veritade mostroe. 17. Ultimamente, quando dico: E, cominciando, chiamo quel signore, chiamo la veritade che sia meco, la quale è quello signore che ne li occhi, cioè ne le dimostrazioni de la filosofia dimora, e bene è signore, chè a lei disposata l'anima è donna, e altrimenti è serva

fuori d’ogni libertade. 18. E dice: Per ch’ella di se stessa s’innamora, però che essa filosofia, che è, sì come detto è nel precedente trattato, amoroso uso di sapienza, se medesima riguarda, quando apparisce la bellezza de li occhi suoi a lei; che altro non è a dire, se non che l’anima filosofante non solamente contempla essa veritade, ma ancora contempla lo suo contemplare medesimo e la bellezza di quello, rivolgendosi sovra se stessa e di se stessa innamorando per la bellezza del suo primo guardare. E così termina ciò che proemialmente per tre membri porta lo testo del presente trattato.

CAPITOLO III

1. Veduta la sentenza del proemio, è da seguire lo trattato; e per meglio quello mostrare, partire si conviene per le sue parti principali, che sono tre: che ne la prima si tratta de la nobilitade secondo oppinioni d'altri; ne la seconda si tratta di quella secondo la propria oppinione; ne la terza si volge lo parlare a la canzone, ad alcuno adornamento di ciò che detto è. 2. La seconda parte comincia: Dico ch'ogni vertù principalmente. La terza comincia: Contra-li-erranti mia, tu te n'andrai. E appresso queste tre parti generali, e altre divisioni fare si convegnono, a bene prender lo 'ntelletto che mostrare s'intende. 3. Però nullo si maravigli se per molte divisioni si procede, con ciò sia cosa che grande e alta opera sia per le mani al presente e da li autori poco cercata, e che lungo convegna essere lo trattato e sottile, nel quale per me ora s'entra, a distrigare lo testo perfettamente secondo la sentenza che esso porta. 4. Dunque dico che ora questa prima parte si divide in due: che ne la prima si pongono le oppinioni altrui, ne la seconda si ripruovano quelle; e comincia questa seconda parte: Chi diffinisce: 'Omo è legno animato'. 5. Ancora la prima parte che rimane sì ha due membri: lo primo è la narrazione de l'oppinione de lo imperadore; lo secondo è la narrazione de l'oppinione de la gente volgare, che è d'ogni ragione ignuda. E comincia questo secondo membro: E altri fu di più lieve savere. 6. Dico dunque: Tale imperò, cioè tale usò l'officio imperiale: dov'è da sapere che Federigo di Soave, ultimo imperadore de li Romani - ultimo dico per rispetto al tempo presente, non ostante che Ridolfo e Andolfo e Alberto poi eletti siano, appresso la sua morte e de li suoi discendenti -, domandato che fosse gentilezza, rispuose ch'era antica ricchezza e belli costumi. 7. E dico che altri fu di più lieve savere: che, pensando e rivolgendo questa diffinizione in ogni parte, levò via l'ultima particula, cioè li belli costumi, e tennesi a la prima, cioè a l'antica ricchezza; e, secondo che lo testo pare dubitare, forse per non avere li belli costumi non volendo perdere lo nome di gentilezza, diffinio quella secondo che per lui facea, cioè possessione d'antica ricchezza. 8. E dico che questa oppinione è quasi di tutti, dicendo che dietro da costui vanno tutti coloro che fanno altrui gentile per essere di progenie lungamente stata ricca, con ciò sia cosa che quasi tutti così latrano. 9. Queste due oppinioni - avvegna che l'una, come detto è, del tutto sia da non curare - due gravissime ragioni pare che abbiano in aiuto: la prima è che dice lo Filosofo che quello che pare a li più, impossibile è del tutto essere falso; la seconda ragione è l'autoritade de la diffinizione de lo imperadore. 10. E perchè meglio si veggia poi la vertude de la veritade, che ogni autoritade convince, ragionare intendo quanto l'una e l'altra di queste ragioni aiutatrice e

possente è. E, prima, [poi che] de la imperiale autoritade sapere non si può se non si ritruovano le sue radici, di quelle per intenzione in capitolo speziale è da trattare.

CAPITOLO IV

1. Lo fondamento radicale de la imperiale maiestade, secondo lo vero, è la necessità de la umana civilitade, che a uno fine è ordinata, cioè a vita felice; a la quale nullo per sè è sufficiente a venire sanza l'aiutorio d'alcuno, con ciò sia cosa che l'uomo abbisogna di molte cose, a le quali uno solo satisfare non può. E però dice lo Filosofo che l'uomo naturalmente è compagnevole animale. 2. E sì come un uomo a sua sufficienza richiede compagnia dimestica di famiglia, così una casa a sua sufficienza richiede una vicinanza: altrimenti molti difetti sosterrebbe che sarebbero impedimento di felicitade. E però che una vicinanza [a] sè non può in tutto satisfare, conviene a satisfacimento di quella essere la cittade. Ancora la cittade richiede a le sue arti e a le sue difensioni vicenda avere e fratellanza con le circavicine cittadi; e però fu fatto lo regno. 3. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che l'animo umano in terminata possessione di terra non si queti, ma sempre desideri gloria d'acquistare, sì come per esperienza vedemo, discordie e guerre conviene surgere intra regno e regno, le quali sono tribulazioni de le cittadi, e per le cittadi de le vicinanze, e per le vicinanze de le case, [e per le case] de l'uomo; e così s'impedisce la felicitade. 4. Il perchè, a queste guerre e le loro cagioni torre via, conviene di necessitade tutta la terra, e quanto a l'umana generazione a possedere è dato, essere Monarchia, cioè uno solo principato, e uno prencipe avere; lo quale, tutto possedendo e più desiderare non possendo, li regi tegna contenti ne li termini de li regni, sì che pace intra loro sia, ne la quale si posino le cittadi, e in questa posa le vicinanze s'amino, in questo amore le case prendano ogni loro bisogno, lo qual preso, l'uomo viva felicemente; che è quello per che esso è nato. 5. E a queste ragioni si possono reducere parole del Filosofo ch'egli ne la Politica dice, che quando più cose ad uno fine sono ordinate, una di quelle conviene essere regolante, o vero reggente, e tutte l'altre rette e regolate. Sì come vedemo in una nave, che diversi offici e diversi fini di quella a uno solo fine sono ordinati, cioè a prendere loro desiderato porto per salutevole via: dove, sì come ciascuno officiale ordina la propria operazione nel proprio fine, così è uno che tutti questi fini considera, e ordina quelli ne l'ultimo di tutti; e questo è lo nocchiero, a la cui voce tutti obedire deono. 6. Questo vedemo ne le religioni, ne li esserciti, in tutte quelle cose che sono, come detto è, a fine ordinate. Per che manifestamente vedere si può che a perfezione de la universale religione de la umana spezie conviene essere uno, quasi nocchiero, che, considerando le diverse condizioni del mondo, a li diversi e necessari offici ordinare abbia del tutto universale e inrepugnabile officio di comandare. 7. E questo officio per eccellenza Imperio è chiamato, sanza nulla addizione, però

che esso è di tutti li altri comandamenti comandamento. E così chi a questo officio è posto è chiamato Imperadore, però che di tutti li comandamenti elli è comandatore, e quello che esso dice a tutti è legge, e per tutti dee essere obedito e ogni altro comandamento da quello di costui prendere vigore e autoritade. E così si manifesta la imperiale maiestade e autoritade essere altissima ne l'umana compagnia. 8. Veramente potrebbe alcuno gavillare dicendo che, tutto che al mondo officio d'imperio si richeggia, non fa ciò l'autoritade de lo romano principe ragionevolemente somma, la quale s'intende dimostrare; però che la romana potenzia non per ragione nè per decreto di convento universale fu acquistata, ma per forza, che a la ragione pare esser contraria. 9. A ciò si può lievemente rispondere, che la elezione di questo sommo officiale convenia primieramente procedere da quello consiglio che per tutti provede, cioè Dio; altrimenti sarebbe stata la elezione per tutti non iguale; con ciò sia cosa che, anzi l'officiale predetto, nullo a bene di tutti intendea. 10. E però che più dolce natura [in] segnoreggiando, e più forte in sostenendo, e più sottile in acquistando nè fu nè fia che quella de la gente latina - sì come per esperienza si può vedere - e massimamente [di] quello popolo santo nel quale l'alto sangue troiano era mischiato, cioè Roma, Dio quello elesse a quello officio. 11. Però che, con ciò sia cosa che a quello ottenere non sanza grandissima vertude venire si potesse, e a quello usare grandissima e umanissima benignitade si richiedesse, questo era quello popolo che a ciò più era disposto. Onde non da forza fu principalmente preso per la romana gente, ma da divina provedenza, che è sopra ogni ragione. E in ciò s'accorda Virgilio nel primo de lo Eneida, quando dice, in persona di Dio parlando: «A costoro - cioè a li Romani - nè termine di cose nè di tempo pongo; a loro ho dato imperio sanza fine». 12. La forza dunque non fu cagione movente, sì come credeva chi gavillava, ma fu cagione instrumentale, sì come sono li colpi del martello cagione del coltello, e l'anima del fabbro è cagione efficiente e movente; e così non forza, ma ragione, [e] ancora divina, [conviene] essere stata principio del romano imperio. 13. E che ciò sia, per due apertissime ragioni vedere si può, le quali mostrano quella civitade imperatrice, e da Dio avere spezial nascimento, e da Dio avere spezial processo. 14. Ma però che in questo capitolo sanza troppa lunghezza ciò trattare non si potrebbe, e li lunghi capitoli sono inimici de la memoria, farò ancora digressione d'altro capitolo per le toccate ragioni mostrare; che non fia sanza utilitade e diletto grande.

CAPITOLO V

1. Non è maraviglia se la divina provedenza, che del tutto l'angelico e lo umano accorgimento soperchia, occultamente a noi molte volte procede, con ciò sia cosa che spesse volte l'umane operazioni a li uomini medesimi ascondono la loro intenzione; ma da maravigliare è forte, quando la essecuzione de lo etterno consiglio tanto manifesto procede c[on] la nostra ragione. 2. E però io nel cominciamento di questo capitolo posso parlare con la bocca di Salomone, che in persona de la Sapienza dice ne li suoi Proverbi: «Udite: però che di grandi cose io debbo parlare». 3. Volendo la 'nmensurabile bontà divina l'umana creatura a sè riconformare, che per lo peccato de la prevaricazione del primo uomo da Dio era partita e disformata, eletto fu in quello altissimo e congiuntissimo consistorio de la Trinitade, che 'l Figliuolo di Dio in terra discendesse a fare questa concordia. 4. E però che ne la sua venuta nel mondo, non solamente lo cielo, ma la terra convenia essere in ottima disposizione; e la ottima disposizione de la terra sia quando ella è monarchia, cioè tutta ad uno principe, come detto è di sopra; ordinato fu per lo divino provedimento quello popolo e quella cittade che ciò dovea compiere, cioè la gloriosa Roma. 5. E però [che] anche l'albergo dove il celestiale rege intrare dovea convenia essere mondissimo e purissimo, ordinata fu una progenie santissima, de la quale dopo molti meriti nascesse una femmina ottima di tutte l'altre, la quale fosse camera del Figliuolo di Dio: e questa progenie fu quella di David, del qual nasce[tt]e la baldezza e l'onore de l'umana generazione, cioè Maria. 6. E però è scritto in Isaia: «Nascerà virga de la radice di Iesse, e fiore de la sua radice salirà»; e Iesse fu padre del sopra detto David. E tutto questo fu in uno temporale, che David nacque e nacque Roma, cioè che Enea venne di Troia in Italia, che fu origine de la cittade romana, sì come testimoniano le scritture. Per che assai è manifesto la divina elezione del romano imperio per lo nascimento de la santa cittade che fu contemporaneo a la radice de la progenie di Maria. 7. E incidentemente è da toccare che, poi che esso cielo cominciò a girare, in migliore disposizione non fu che allora quando di là su discese Colui che l'ha fatto e che 'l governa; sì come ancora per virtù di loro arti li matematici possono ritrovare. 8. Nè 'l mondo mai non fu nè sarà sì perfettamente disposto come allora che a la voce d'un solo, principe del roman popolo e comandatore, fu ordinato, sì come testimonia Luca evangelista. E però [che] pace universale era per tutto, che mai, più, non fu nè fia, la nave de l'umana compagnia dirittamente per dolce cammino a debito porto correa. 9. Oh ineffabile e incomprensibile sapienza di Dio che a una ora, per la tua venuta, in Siria suso e qua in Italia tanto dinanzi ti preparasti! E oh

stoltissime e vilissime bestiuole che a guisa d'uomo voi pascete, che presummete contra nostra fede parlare e volete sapere, filando e zappando, ciò che Iddio, che con tanta prudenza hae ordinato! Maladetti siate voi, e la vostra presunzione, e chi a voi crede! 10. E come detto è di sopra nel fine del precedente [capitolo del presente] trattato, non solamente speziale nascimento, ma speziale processo ebbe da Dio; chè brievemente, da Romolo incominciando, che fu di quella primo padre, infino a la sua perfettissima etade, cioè al tempo del predetto suo imperadore, non pur per umane ma per divine operazioni andò lo suo processo. 11. Che se consideriamo li sette regi che prima la governaro, cioè Romolo, Numa, Tullo, Anco e li re Tarquini, che furono quasi baiuli e tutori de la sua puerizia, noi trovare potremo per le scritture de le romane istorie, massimamente per Tito Livio, coloro essere stati di diverse nature, secondo l'opportunitade del pr[o]cedente tempo. 12. Se noi consideriamo poi [quella] per la maggiore adolescenza sua, poi che da la reale tutoria fu emancipata, da Bruto primo consolo infino a Cesare primo prencipe sommo, noi troveremo lei essaltata non con umani cittadini, ma con divini, ne li quali non amore umano, ma divino era inspirato in amare lei. E ciò non potea nè dovea essere se non per ispeziale fine, da Dio inteso in tanta celestiale infusione. 13. E chi dirà che fosse sanza divina inspirazione, Fabrizio infinita quasi moltitudine d'oro rifiutare, per non volere abbandonare sua patria? Curio, da li Sanniti tentato di corrompere, grandissima quantità d'oro per carità de la patria rifiutare, dicendo che li romani cittadini non l'oro, ma li possessori de l'oro possedere voleano? e Muzio la sua mano propria incendere, perchè fallato avea lo colpo che per liberare Roma pensato avea? 14. Chi dirà di Torquato, giudicatore del suo figliuolo a morte per amore del publico bene, sanza divino aiutorio ciò avere sofferto? e Bruto predetto similemente? Chi dirà de li Deci e de li Drusi, che puosero la loro vita per la patria? Chi dirà del cattivato Regolo, da Cartagine mandato a Roma per commutare li presi cartaginesi a sè e a li altri presi romani, avere contra sè per amore di Roma, dopo la legazione ritratta, consigliato, solo da [umana, e non da] divina natura mosso? 15. Chi dirà di Quinzio Cincinnato, fatto dittatore e tolto da lo aratro, e dopo lo tempo de l'officio, spontaneamente quello rifiutando a lo arare essere ritornato? Chi dirà di Cammillo, bandeggiato e cacciato in essilio, essere venuto a liberare Roma contra li suoi nimici, e dopo la sua liberazione, spontaneamente essere ritornato in essilio per non offendere la senatoria autoritade, sanza divina istigazione? 16. O sacratissimo petto di Catone, chi presummerà di te parlare? Certo maggiormente di te parlare non si può che tacere, e seguire Ieronimo quando nel proemio de la Bibbia, là dove di Paolo tocca, dice che meglio è tacere che poco dire. 17. Certo e manifesto esser dee, rimembrando la vita di costoro e de li altri divini cittadini, non sanza alcuna luce de la divina bontade,

aggiunta sopra la loro buona natura, essere tante mirabili operazioni state; e manifesto esser dee, questi eccellentissimi essere stati strumenti con li quali procedette la divina provedenza ne lo romano imperio, dove più volte parve esse braccia di Dio essere presenti. 18. E non puose Iddio le mani proprie a la battaglia dove li Albani con li Romani, dal principio, per lo capo del regno combattero, quando uno solo Romano ne le mani ebbe la franchigia di Roma? Non puose Iddio le mani proprie, quando li Franceschi, tutta Roma presa, prendeano di furto Campidoglio di notte, e solamente la voce d'una oca fè ciò sentire? 19. E non puose Iddio le mani, quando, per la guerra d'Annibale avendo perduti tanti cittadini che tre moggia d'anella in Africa erano portati, li Romani volsero abbandonare la terra, se quel benedetto Scipione giovane non avesse impresa l'andata in Africa per la sua franchezza? E non puose Iddio le mani quando uno nuovo cittadino di picciola condizione, cioè Tullio, contra tanto cittadino quanto era Catellina la romana libertà difese? Certo sì. 20. Per che più chiedere non si dee, a vedere che spezial nascimento e spezial processo, da Dio pensato e ordinato, fosse quello de la santa cittade. Certo di ferma sono oppinione che le pietre che ne le mura sue stanno siano degne di reverenzia, e lo suolo dov'ella siede sia degno oltre quello che per li uomini è predicato e approvato.

CAPITOLO VI

1. Di sopra, nel terzo capitolo di questo trattato, promesso fue di ragionare de l'altezza de la imperiale autoritade e de la filosofica; e però, ragionato de la imperiale, procedere oltre si conviene la mia digressione, a vedere di quella del Filosofo, secondo la promessione fatta. 2. E qui è prima da vedere che questo vocabulo vuole dire, però che qui è maggiore mestiere di saperlo che sopra lo ragionamento de la imperiale, la quale per la sua maiestade non pare esser dubitata. 3. È dunque da sapere che 'autoritade' non è altro che 'atto d'autore'. Questo vocabulo, cioè 'autore', sanza quella terza lettera C, può discendere da due principii: l'uno si è d'uno verbo molto lasciato da l'uso in gramatica, che significa tanto quanto 'legare parole', cioè 'auieo'. E chi ben guarda lui, ne la sua prima voce apertamente vedrà che elli stesso lo dimostra, che solo di legame di parole è fatto, cioè di sole cinque vocali, che sono anima e legame d'ogni parole, e composto d'esse per modo volubile, a figurare imagine di legame. 4. Chè, cominciando da l'A, ne l'U quindi si rivolve, e viene diritto per I ne l'E, quindi si rivolve e torna ne l'O; sì che veramente imagina questa figura: A, E, I, O, U, la quale è figura di legame. E in quanto 'autore' viene e discende da questo verbo, si prende solo per li poeti, che con l'arte musaica le loro parole hanno legate: e di questa significazione al presente non s'intende. 5. L'altro principio, onde 'autore' discende, sì come testimonia Uguiccione nel principio de le sue Derivazioni, è uno vocabulo greco che dice 'autentin', che tanto vale in latino quanto 'degno di fede e d'obedienza'. E così, 'autore', quinci derivato, si prende per ogni persona degna d'essere creduta e obedita. E da questo viene questo vocabulo del quale al presente si tratta, cioè 'autoritade'; per che si può vedere che 'autoritade' vale tanto quanto 'atto degno di fede e d'obedienza'. [Onde, quand'io provi che Aristotile è dignissimo di fede e d'obedienza,] manifesto è che le sue parole sono somma e altissima autoritade. 6. Che Aristotile sia dignissimo di fede e d'obedienza così provare si può. Intra operarii e artefici di diverse arti e operazioni, ordinate a una operazione od arte finale, l'artefice o vero operatore di quella massimamente dee essere da tutti obedito e creduto, sì come colui che solo considera l'ultimo fine di tutti li altri fini. Onde al cavaliere dee credere lo spadaio, lo frenaio, lo sellaio, lo scudaio, e tutti quelli mestieri che a l'arte di cavalleria sono ordinati. 7. E però che tutte l'umane operazioni domandano uno fine, cioè quello de l'umana vita al quale l'uomo è ordinato in quanto elli è uomo, lo maestro e l'artefice che quello ne dimostra e considera, massimamente obedire e credere si dee. Questi è Aristotile: dunque esso è dignissimo di fede e d'obedienza. 8. E a vedere come Aristotile è maestro

e duca de la ragione umana, in quanto intende a la sua finale operazione, si conviene sapere che questo nostro fine, che ciascuno disia naturalmente, antichissimamente fu per li savi cercato. E però che li disideratori di quello che sono in tanto numero e li appetiti sono quasi tutti singularmente diversi, avvegna che universalmente siano pur [uno], ma[lag]evole fu molto a scernere quello dove dirittamente ogni umano appetito si riposasse. 9. Furono dunque filosofi molto antichi, de li quali primo e prencipe fu Zenone, che videro e credettero questo fine de la vita umana essere solamente la rigida onestade; cioè rigidamente, sanza respetto alcuno, la verità e la giustizia seguire, di nulla mostrare dolore, di nulla mostrare allegrezza, di nulla passione avere sentore. 10. E diffiniro così questo onesto: ‘quello che, sanza utilitade e sanza frutto, per sè di ragione è da laudare’. E costoro e la loro setta chiamati furono Stoici, e fu di loro quello glorioso Catone di cui non fui di sopra oso di parlare. 11. Altri filosofi furono, che videro e credettero altro che costoro; e di questi fu primo e prencipe uno filosofo che fu chiamato Epicuro; chè, veggendo che ciascuno animale, tosto che nato è, quasi da natura dirizzato nel debito fine, che fugge dolore e domanda allegrezza, quelli disse questo nostro fine essere voluptade (non dico ‘voluntade’, ma scrivola per P), cioè diletto sanza dolore. 12. E però [che] tra ‘l diletto e lo dolore non ponea mezzo alcuno, dicea che ‘voluptade’ non era altro che ‘non dolore’, sì come pare Tullio recitare nel primo di Fine di Beni. E di questi, che da Epicuro sono Epicurei nominati, fu Torquato, nobile romano, disceso del sangue del glorioso Torquato del quale feci menzione di sopra. 13. Altri furono, e cominciamento ebbero da Socrate e poi dal suo successore Platone, che, agguardando più sottilmente, e veggendo che ne le nostre operazioni si potea peccare e peccavasi nel troppo e nel poco, dissero che la nostra operazione sanza soperchio e sanza difetto, misurata col mezzo per nostra elezione preso, ch’è virtù, era quel fine di che al presente si ragiona; e chiamaronlo ‘operazione con virtù’. 14. E questi furono Academici chiamati, sì come fue Platone e Speusippo suo nepote: chiamati per luogo così dove Plato studiava, cioè Academia; nè da Socrate presero vocabulo, però che ne la sua filosofia nulla fu affermato. 15. Veramente Aristotile, che Stagirite ebbe sopranome, e Zenocrate Calcedonio, suo compagnone, [e per lo studio loro], e per lo ‘ngegno [singulare] e quasi divino che la natura in Aristotile messo avea, questo fine conoscendo per lo modo socratico quasi e academico, limaro e a perfezione la filosofia morale redussero, e massimamente Aristotile. E però che Aristotile cominciò a disputare andando in qua e in lae, chiamati furono - lui dico, e li suoi compagni - Peripatetici, che tanto vale quanto ‘deambulatori’. 16. E però che la perfezione di questa moralitade per Aristotile terminata fue, lo nome de li Academici si spense, e tutti quelli che a questa setta si presero

Peripatetici sono chiamati; e tiene questa gente oggi lo reggimento del mondo in dottrina per tutte parti, e puotesi appellare quasi cattolica oppinione. Per che vedere si può, Aristotile essere additatore e conduttore de la gente a questo segno. E questo mostrare si volea. 17. Per che, tutto ricogliendo, è manifesto lo principale intento, cioè che l'autoritade del filosofo sommo di cui s'intende sia piena di tutto vigore. E non repugna a la imperiale autoritade; ma quella sanza questa è pericolosa, e questa sanza quella è quasi debile, non per sè, ma per la disordinanza de la gente; sì che l'una con l'altra congiunta utilissime e pienissime sono d'ogni vigore. 18. E però si scrive in quello di Sapienza: «Amate lo lume de la sapienza, voi tutti che siete dinanzi a' populi». Ciò è a dire: Congiungasi la filosofica autoritade con la imperiale, a bene e perfettamente reggere. 19. Oh miseri che al presente reggete! e oh miserissimi che retti siete! chè nulla filosofica autoritade si congiunge con li vostri reggimenti nè per propio studio nè per consiglio, sì che a tutti si può dire quella parola de lo Ecclesiaste: «Guai a te, terra, lo cui re è fanciullo, e li cui principi la domane mangiano!»; e a nulla terra si può dire quella che seguita: «Beata la terra lo cui re è nobile e li cui principi [cibo] usano i[n] suo tempo, a bisogno e non a lussuria!». 20. Ponetevi mente, nemici di Dio, a' fianchi, voi che le verghe de' reggimenti d'Italia prese avete - e dico a voi, Carlo e Federigo regi, e a voi altri principi e tiranni -; e guardate chi a lato vi siede per consiglio, e annumerate quante volte lo die questo fine de l'umana vita per li vostri consiglieri v'è additato! Meglio sarebbe a voi come rondine volare basso, che come nibbio altissime rote fare sopra le cose vilissime.

CAPITOLO VII

1. Poi che veduto è quanto è da reverire l'autoritade imperiale e la filosofica, che paiono aiutare le proposte oppinioni, è da ritornare al diritto calle de lo inteso processo. 2. Dico dunque che questa ultima oppinione del vulgo è tanto durata, che sanza altro respetto, sanza inquisizione d'alcuna ragione, gentile è chiamato ciascuno che figlio sia o nepote d'alcuno valente uomo, tutto che esso sia da niente. E questo è quello che dice: Ed è tanto durata La così falsa oppinion tra nui, Che l'uom chiama colui Omo gentil che può dicere: 'Io fui Nepote, o figlio, di cotal valente', Benchè sia da niente. 3. Per che è da notare che pericolosissima negligenza è lasciare la mala oppinione prendere piede; che così come l'erba multiplica nel campo non cultato, e sormonta, e cuopre la spiga del frumento sì che, disparte agguardando, lo frumento non pare, e perdesi lo frutto finalmente; così la mala oppinione ne la mente, non gastigata e corretta, sì cresce e multiplica sì che le spighe de la ragione, cioè la vera oppinione si nasconde e quasi sepulta si perde. 4. Oh com'è grande la mia impresa in questa canzone, a volere omai così trifoglioso campo sarchiare come quello de la comune sentenza, sì lungamente da questa cultura abbandonato! Certo non del tutto questo mondare intendo, ma solo in quelle parti dove le spighe de la ragione non sono del tutto sorprese: cioè coloro dirizzare intendo ne' quali alcuno lumetto di ragione per buona loro natura vive ancora, chè de li altri tanto è da curare quanto di bruti animali; però che non minore maraviglia mi sembra reducere a ragione [colui in cui è la luce di ragione] del tutto spenta, che reducere in vita colui che quattro dì è stato nel sepulcro. 5. Poi che la mala condizione di questa populare oppinione è narrata, subitamente, quasi come cosa orribile, quella percuot[o] fuori di tutto l'ordine de la riprovagione, dicendo: Ma vilissimo sembra, a chi 'l ver guata, a dare a intendere la sua intollerabile malizia, dicendo costoro mentire massimamente; però che non solamente colui è vile, cioè non gentile, che disceso di buoni è malvagio, ma eziandio è vilissimo: e pongo essemplo del cammino mostrato [e poscia errato]. 6. Dove, a ciò mostrare, far mi conviene una questione, e rispondere a quella, in questo modo. Una pianura è con certi sentieri: campo con siepi, con fossati, con pietre, con legname, con tutti quasi impedimenti, fuori de li suoi stretti sentieri. Nevato è sì, che tutto cuopre la neve e rende una figura in ogni parte, sì che d'alcuno sentiero vestigio non si vede. 7. Viene alcuno da l'una parte de la campagna e vuole andare a una magione che è da l'altra parte; e per sua industria, cioè per accorgimento e per bontade d'ingegno, solo da sè guidato, per lo diritto cammino si va là dove intende, lasciando le vestigie de li suoi passi diretro da sè. Viene un altro appresso costui,

e vuole a questa magione andare, e non li è mestiere se non seguire li vestigi lasciati; e, per suo difetto, lo cammino che altri sanza scorta ha saputo tenere, questo scorto erra, e tortisce per li pruni e per le ruine, e a la parte dove dee non va. 8. Quale di costoro si dee dicere valente? Rispondo: quegli che andò dinanzi. Questo altro come si chiamerà? Rispondo: vilissimo. Perchè non si chiama non valente, cioè vile? Rispondo: perchè non valente, cioè vile, sarebbe da chiamare colui che, non avendo alcuna scorta, non fosse ben camminato; ma però che questi l'ebbe, lo suo errore e lo suo difetto non può salire, e però è da dire non vile, ma vilissimo. 9. E così quelli che dal padre o d'alcuno suo maggiore [buono è disceso ed è malvagio], non solamente è vile, ma vilissimo, e degno d'ogni dispetto e vituperio più che altro villano. E perchè l'uomo da questa infima viltade si guardi, comanda Salomone a colui che 'l valente antecessore hae avuto, nel vigesimo secondo capitolo de li Proverbi: «Non trapasserai li termini antichi che puosero li padri tuoi»; e dinanzi dice, nel quarto capitolo del detto libro: «La via de' giusti», cioè de' valenti, «quasi luce splendiente procede, e quella de li malvagi è oscura. Elli non sanno dove rovinano». 10. Ultimamente, quando si dice: E tocca a tal, ch'è morto e va per terra, a maggiore detrimento dico questo cotale vilissimo essere morto, parendo vivo. Onde è da sapere che veramente morto lo malvagio uomo dire si puote, e massimamente quelli che da la via del buono suo antecessore si parte. 11. E ciò si può così mostrare. Sì come dice Aristotile nel secondo de l'Anima, «vivere è l'essere de li viventi»; e per ciò che vivere è per molti modi (sì come ne le piante vegetare, ne li animali vegetare e sentire e muovere, ne li uomini vegetare, sentire, muovere e ragionare, o vero intelligere), e le cose si deono denominare da la più nobile parte, manifesto è che vivere ne li animali è sentire - animali, dico, bruti -, vivere ne l'uomo è ragione usare. 12. Dunque, se 'l vivere è l'essere [dei viventi e vivere ne l'uomo è ragione usare, ragione usare è l'essere] de l'uomo, e così da quello uso partire è partire da essere, e così è essere morto. E non si parte da l'uso del ragionare chi non ragiona lo fine de la sua vita? e non si parte da l'uso de la ragione chi non ragiona il cammino che fare dee? Certo si parte; e ciò si manifesta massimamente c[on] colui che ha le vestigie innanzi, e non le mira. 13. E però dice Salomone nel quinto capitolo de li Proverbi: «Quelli muore che non ebbe disciplina, e ne la moltitudine de la sua stoltezza sarà ingannato». Ciò è a dire: Colui è morto che non si fè discepolo, che non segue lo maestro; e questo vilissimo è quello. 14. Potrebbe alcuno dicere: Come è morto e va? Rispondo che è morto [uomo] e rimaso bestia. Chè, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Anima, le potenze de l'anima stanno sopra sè come la figura de lo quadrangulo sta sopra lo triangulo, e lo pentangulo, cioè la figura che ha cinque canti, sta sopra lo quadrangulo: e così la sensitiva sta sopra la vegetativa, e la

intellettiva sta sopra la sensitiva. 15. Dunque, come levando l’ultimo canto del pentangulo rimane quadrangulo e non più pentangulo, così levando l’ultima potenza de l’anima, cioè la ragione, non rimane più uomo, ma cosa con anima sensitiva solamente, cioè animale bruto. E questa è la sentenza del secondo verso de la canzone impresa, nel quale si pongono l’altrui oppinioni.

CAPITOLO VIII

1. Lo più bello ramo che de la radice razionale consurga si è la discrezione. Chè, sì come dice Tommaso sopra lo prologo de l'Etica, "conoscere l'ordine d'una cosa ad altra è proprio atto di ragione», e è questa discrezione. Uno de' più belli e dolci frutti di questo ramo è la reverenza che dee lo minore a lo maggiore. 2. Onde Tullio, nel primo de li Offici, parlando de la bellezza che in su l'onestade risplende, dice la reverenza essere di quella; e così come questa è bellezza d'onestade, così lo suo contrario è turpezza e menomanza de l'onesto, lo quale contrario inreverenza, o vero tracotanza dicere in nostro volgare si può. 3. E però esso Tullio nel medesimo luogo dice: «Mettere a negghienza di sapere quello che li altri sentono di lui, non solamente è di persona arrogante, ma di dissoluta»; che non vuole altro dire, se non che arroganza e dissoluzione è se medesimo non conoscere, ch'è principio ed è la misura d'ogni reverenza. 4. Per che io volendo, con tutta reverenza e a lo Principe e al Filosofo portando, la malizia d'alquanti de la mente levare, per fondarvi poi suso la luce de la veritade, prima che a riprovare le proposte oppinioni proceda, mostrerò come, quelle riprovando, nè contra l'imperiale maiestade nè contra lo Filosofo si ragiona inreverentemente. 5. Che se in alcuna parte di tutto questo libro inreverente mi mostrasse, non sarebbe tanto laido quanto in questo trattato; nel quale, di nobilitade trattando, me nobile e non villano deggio mostrare. E prima mostrerò me non presummere [contra l'autorità del Filosofo; poi mostrerò me non presummere] contra la maiestade imperiale. 6. Dico adunque che quando lo Filosofo dice: «Quello che pare a li più, impossibile è del tutto essere falso», non intende dicere del parere di fuori, cioè sensuale, ma di quello dentro, cioè razionale; con ciò sia cosa che 'l sensuale parere secondo la più gente, sia molte volte falsissimo, massimamente ne li sensibili comuni, là dove lo senso spesse volte è ingannato. 7. Onde sapemo che a la più gente lo sole pare di larghezza, nel diametro, d'un piede, e sì è ciò falsissimo. Chè, secondo lo cercamento e la invenzione che ha fatto l'umana ragione con l'altre sue arti, lo diametro del corpo del sole è cinque volte quanto quello de la terra, e anche una mezza volta; [onde], con ciò sia cosa che la terra per lo diametro suo sia semilia cinquecento miglia, lo diametro del sole, che a la sensuale apparenza appare di quantità d'un piede, è trentacinque milia settecento cinquanta miglia. 8. Per che manifesto è Aristotile non avere inteso de la sensuale apparenza; e però, se io intendo solo a la sensuale apparenza riprovare, non faccio contra la intenzione del Filosofo, e però nè la riverenza che a lui si dee non offendo. E che io sensuale apparenza intenda riprovare è manifesto. 9. Chè costoro, che così giudicano, non giudicano se non per quello che sentono di

queste cose che la fortuna può dare e torre; che perchè veggiono fare le parentele e li alti matrimonii, li edifici mirabili, le possessioni larghe, le signorie grandi, credono quelle essere cagioni di nobilitade, anzi essa nobilitade credono quelle essere. Chè s'elli giudicassero con l'apparenza razionale, dicerebbero lo contrario, cioè la nobilitade essere cagione di questo, sì come di sotto in questo trattato si vedrà. 10. E come io, secondo che vedere si può, contra la reverenza del Filosofo non parlo ciò riprovando, così non parlo contra la reverenza de lo Imperio: e la ragione mostrare intendo. Ma però che, dinanzi da l'avversario s[e] ragiona, lo rettorico dee molta cautela usare nel suo sermone, acciò che l'avversario quindi non prenda materia di turbare la veritade, io, che al volto di tanti avversarii parlo in questo trattato, non posso [brievemente] parlare; onde, se le mie digressioni sono lunghe, nullo si maravigli. 11. Dico adunque che, a mostrare me non essere inreverente a la maiestade de lo Imperio, prima è da vedere che è 'reverenza'. Dico che reverenza non è altro che confessione di debita subiezione per manifesto segno. E veduto questo, da distinguere è intra loro 'inreverente' [e 'non reverente'. Lo inreverente] dice privazione, lo non reverente dice negazione. E però la inreverenza è disconfessare la debita subiezione, per manifesto segno, dico, e la non reverenza è negare la debita subiezione. 12. Puote l'uomo disdicere la cosa doppiamente: per uno modo puote l'uomo disdicere offendendo a la veritade, quando de la debita confessione si priva, e questo propriamente è 'disconfessare'; per un altro modo puote l'uomo disdicere non offendendo a la veritade, quando quello che non è non si confessa, e questo è proprio 'negare': sì come disdicere l'uomo sè essere del tutto mortale, è negare, propriamente parlando. 13. Per che se io niego la reverenza de lo Imperio, non sono inreverente, ma sono non reverente: che non è contro a la reverenza, con ciò sia cosa che quella non offenda; sì come lo non vivere non offende la vita, ma offende quella la morte, che è di quella privazione. Onde altro è morte e altro è non vivere; che non vivere è ne le pietre. 14. E però che morte dice privazione, che non può essere se non nel subietto de l'abito, e le pietre non sono subietto di vita, per che non 'morte', ma 'non vivere' dicere si deono; similemente io, che in questo caso a lo Imperio reverenza avere non debbo, se la disdico, inreverente non sono, ma sono non reverente, che non è tracotanza nè cosa da biasimare. 15. Ma tracotanza sarebbe l'essere reverente (se reverenza si potesse dicere), però che in maggiore e in vera [in]reverenza si cadrebbe, cioè de la natura e de la veritade, sì come di sotto si vedrà. E da questo fallo si guardò quello maestro de li filosofi, Aristotile, nel principio de l'Etica quando dice: «Se due sono li amici, e l'uno è la verità, a la verità è da consentire». 16. Veramente, perchè detto ho ch'i' sono non reverente, che è la reverenza negare, cioè negare la debita subiezione per manifesto segno, da

vedere è come questo è negare e non disconfessare, cioè da vedere come, in questo caso, io non sia debitamente a la imperiale maiestà subietto. E perchè lunga conviene essere la ragione, per proprio capitolo immediatamente intendo ciò mostrare.

CAPITOLO IX

1. A vedere come in questo caso, cioè in riprovando o in approvando l'oppinione de lo Imperadore, a lui non sono tenuto a subiezione, reducere a la mente si conviene quello che de lo imperiale officio di sopra, nel quarto capitolo di questo trattato, è ragionato, cioè che a perfezione de l'umana vita la imperiale autoritade fu trovata, e che ella è regolatrice e rettrice di tutte le nostre operazioni, giustamente; che, pertanto, oltre quanto le nostre operazioni si stendono tanto la maiestade imperiale ha giurisdizione, e fuori di quelli termini non si sciampia. 2. Ma sì come ciascuna arte e officio umano da lo imperiale è a certi termini limitato, così questo da Dio a certo termine è finito: e non è da maravigliare, chè l'officio e l'arte de la natura finito in tutte sue operazioni vedemo. Che se prendere volemo la natura universale di tutto, tanto ha giurisdizione quanto tutto lo mondo, dico lo cielo e la terra, si stende; e questo è a certo termine, sì come per lo terzo de la Fisica e per lo primo De Celo et Mundo è provato. 3. Dunque la giurisdizione de la natura universale è a certo termine finita - e per consequente la parti[culare] -; e anche di costei è limitatore colui che da nulla è limitato, cioè la prima bontade, che è Dio, che solo con la infinita capacitade infinito comprende. 4. E a vedere li termini de le nostre operazioni, è da sapere che solo quelle sono nostre operazioni che subiacciono a la ragione e a la volontade; che se in noi è l'operazione digestiva, questa non è umana, ma naturale. 5. Ed è da sapere che la nostra ragione a quattro maniere d'operazioni, diversamente da considerare, è ordinata: chè operazioni sono che ella solamente considera, e non fa nè può fare alcuna di quelle, sì come sono le cose naturali e le soprannaturali e le matematice; e operazioni che essa considera e fa nel proprio atto suo, le quali si chiamano razionali, sì come sono arti di parlare; e operazioni sono che ella considera e fa in materia di fuori di sè, sì come sono arti meccanice. 6. E queste tutte operazioni, avvegna che 'l considerare loro subiaccia a la nostra volontade, elle per loro a nostra volontade non subiacciono: chè, perchè noi volessimo che le cose gravi salissero per natura suso, e perchè noi volessimo che 'l silogismo con falsi principii conchiudesse veritade dimostrando, e perchè noi volessimo che la casa sedesse così forte pendente come diritta, non sarebbe; però che di queste operazioni non fattori propriamente, ma li trovatori semo. Altri l'ordinò e fece maggior fattore. 7. Sono anche operazioni che la nostra [ragione] considera ne l'atto de la volontade, sì come offendere e giovare, sì come star fermo e fuggire a la battaglia, sì come stare casto e lussuriare, e queste del tutto soggiacciono a la nostra volontade; e però semo detti da loro buoni e rei perch'elle sono proprie nostre del tutto,

perchè, quanto la nostra volontade ottenere puote, tanto le nostre operazioni si stendono. 8. E con ciò sia cosa che in tutte queste volontarie operazioni sia equitade alcuna da conservare e iniquitade da fuggire (la quale equitade per due cagioni si può perdere, o per non sapere quale essa si sia o per non volere quella seguitare), trovata fu la Ragione scritta, e per mostrarla e per comandarla. Onde dice Augustino: «Se questa - cioè equitade - li uomini la conoscessero, e conosciuta servassero, la Ragione scritta non sarebbe mestiere»; e però è scritto nel principio del Vecchio Digesto: «La ragione scritta è arte di bene e d'equitade». 9. A questa scrivere, mostrare e comandare, è questo officiale posto di cui si parla, cioè lo Imperadore, al quale tanto quanto le nostre operazioni proprie, che dette sono, si stendono, siamo subietti; e più oltre no. 10. Per questa ragione, in ciascuna arte e in ciascuno mestiere li artefici e li discenti sono, ed esser deono, subietti al prencipe e al maestro di quelle, in quelli mestieri ed in quella arte; e fuori di quello la subiezione pere, però che pere lo principato. Sì che quasi dire si può de lo Imperadore, volendo lo suo officio figurare con una imagine, che elli sia lo cavalcatore de la umana volontade. Lo quale cavallo come vada sanza lo cavalcatore per lo campo assai è manifesto, e spezialmente ne la misera Italia, che sanza mezzo alcuno a la sua governazione è rimasa! 11. E da considerare è che quanto la cosa è più propia de l'arte o del maestro, tanto è maggiore in quella la subiezione; chè, multiplicata la cagione, multiplica l'effetto. Onde è da sapere che cose sono che sono sì pure arti, che la natura è instrumento de l'arte: sì come vogare con remo, dove l'arte fa suo instrumento de la impulsione, che è naturale moto; sì come nel trebbiare lo frumento, che l'arte fa suo instrumento del caldo, che è natural qualitade; e in queste massimamente a lo prencipe e maestro de l'arte esser si dee subietto. 12. E cose sono dove l'arte è instrumento de la natura, e queste sono meno arti; e in esse sono meno subietti li artefici a loro prencipe; sì com'è dare lo seme a la terra (qui si vuole attendere la volontà de la natura), sì come uscire è di porto (qui si vuole attendere la naturale disposizione del tempo). E però vedemo in queste cose spesse volte contenzione tra li artefici, e domandare consiglio lo maggiore al minore. 13. Altre cose sono che non sono de l'arte, e paiono avere con quella alcuna parentela, e quinci sono li uomini molte volte ingannati; e in queste li discenti a lo artefice, o vero maestro, subietti non sono, nè credere a lui sono tenuti quanto è per l'arte: sì come pescare pare aver parentela col navicare, e conoscere la vertù de l'erbe pare aver parentela con l'agricoltura; che non hanno insieme alcuna regola, con ciò sia cosa che 'l pescare sia sotto l'arte de la venagione e sotto suo comandare, e lo conoscere la vertù de l'erbe sia sotto la medicina o vero sotto più nobile dottrina. 14. Queste cose simigliantemente, che de l'altre arti sono ragionate, vedere si possono ne l'arte imperiale; chè regole

sono in quella che sono pure arti, sì come sono le leggi de' matrimonii, de li servi, de le milizie, de li successori in dignitade, e di queste in tutto siamo a lo Imperadore subietti, sanza dubbio e sospetto alcuno. 15. Altre leggi sono che sono quasi seguitatrici di natura, sì come constituire l'uomo d'etade sofficiente a ministrare, e di queste non semo in tutto subietti. Altre molte sono che paiono avere alcuna parentela con l'arte imperiale - e qui fu ingannato ed è chi crede che la sentenza imperiale sia in questa parte autentica -: sì come [diffinire] giovinezza e gentilezza, sovra le quali nullo imperiale giudicio è da consentire, in quanto elli è imperadore: però, quello che è di [Cesare sia renduto a Cesare, e quello che è di] Dio sia renduto a Dio. 16. Onde non è da credere nè da consentire a Nerone imperadore, che disse che giovinezza era bellezza e fortezza del corpo, ma a colui che dicesse che giovinezza è colmo de la naturale vita, che sarebbe filosofo. E però è manifesto che diffinire di gentilezza non è de l'arte imperiale; e se non è de l'arte, trattando di quella, a lui non siamo subietti; e se non [siamo] subietti, reverire lui in ciò non siamo tenuti: e questo è quello [che cerc]ando s'andava. 17. Per che omai con tutta licenza e con tutta franchezza d'animo è da ferire nel petto a le usate oppinioni, quelle per terra versando, acciò che la verace, per questa mia vittoria, tegna lo campo de la mente di coloro per c[ui] fa questa luce avere vigore.

CAPITOLO X

1. Poi che poste sono l'altrui oppinioni di nobilitade, e mostrato è quelle riprovare a me esser licito, verrò a quella parte ragionare che ciò ripruova; che comincia, sì come detto è di sopra: Chi diffinisce: 'Omo è legno animato'. E però, è da sapere che l'oppinione de lo Imperadore - avvegna che con difetto quella ponga - ne l'una particula, cioè là dove disse belli costumi, toccò de li costumi di nobilitade, e però in quella parte riprovare non s'intende. 2. L'altra particula, che di natura di nobilitade è del tutto diversa, s'intende riprovare; la quale due cose pare dicere quando dice antica ricchezza, cioè tempo e divizie, le quali a nobilitade sono del tutto diverse, come detto è e come di sotto si mostrerà. E però riprovando si fanno due parti: prima si ripruovano le divizie, e poi si ripruova lo tempo essere cagione di nobilitade. La seconda parte comincia: Nè voglion che vil uom gentil divegna. 3. E da sapere è che, riprovate le divizie, è riprovata non solamente l'oppinione de lo Imperadore in quella parte che le divizie tocca, ma eziandio quella del vulgo interamente che solo ne le divizie si fondava. La prima parte in due si divide: che ne la prima generalmente si dice lo 'mperadore essere stato erroneo ne la diffinizione di nobilitade; secondamente si mostra ragione perchè. E comincia questa seconda parte: Chè le divizie, sì come si crede. 4. Dico adunque, Chi diffinisce: 'Omo è legno animato', che prima dice non vero, cioè falso, in quanto dice 'legno'; e poi parla non intero, cioè con difetto, in quanto dice 'animato', non dicendo 'razionale', che è differenza per la quale uomo da la bestia si parte. 5. Poi dico che per questo modo fu erroneo in diffinire quelli che tenne impero: non dicendo 'imperadore', ma 'quelli che tenne imperio', a mostrare (come detto è di sopra) questa cosa determinare essere fuori d'imperiale officio. Poi dico similemente lui errare, che puose de la nobilitade falso subietto, cioè 'antica ricchezza', e poi procede[tt]e a 'defettiva forma', o vero differenza, cioè 'belli costumi', che non comprendono ogni formalitade di nobilitade, ma molto picciola parte, sì come di sotto si mostrerà. 6. E non è da lasciare, tutto che 'l testo si taccia, che messere lo Imperadore in questa parte non errò pur ne le parti de la diffinizione, ma eziandio nel modo di diffinire, avvegna che, secondo la fama che di lui grida, elli fosse loico e clerico grande: chè la diffinizione de la nobilitade più degnamente si farebbe da li effetti che da' principii, con ciò sia cosa che essa paia avere ragione di principio, che non si può notificare per cose prime, ma per posteriori. 7. Poi quando dico: Chè le divizie, sì come si crede, mostro come elle non possono causare nobilitade, perchè sono vili; e mostro quelle non poterla torre, perchè son disgiunte molto da nobilitade. E pruovo quelle essere vili per uno loro massimo e manifestissimo

difetto; e questo fo quando dico: Che siano vili appare. 8. Ultimamente conchiudo, per virtù di quello che detto è di sopra, l'animo diritto non mutarsi per loro transmutazione; che è pruova di quello che detto è di sopra, quelle essere da nobilitade disgiunte, per non seguire l'effetto de la congiunzione. Ove è da sapere che, sì come vuole lo Filosofo, tutte le cose che fanno alcuna cosa, conviene essere prima quelle perfettamente in quello essere; onde dice nel settimo de la Metafisica: «Quando una cosa si genera da un'altra, generasi di quella, essendo in quello essere». 9. Ancora è da sapere che ogni cosa che si corrompe, sì si corrompe, precedente alcuna alterazione, e ogni cosa che è alterata conviene essere congiunta con l'altera[nte cag]ione, sì come vuole lo Filosofo nel settimo de la Fisica e nel primo De Generatione. Queste cose proposte, così procedo, e dico che le divizie, come altri credea, non possono dare nobilitade; e a mostrare maggiore diversitade avere con quella, dico che non la possono torre a chi l'ha. 10. Dare non la possono, con ciò sia cosa che naturalmente siano vili, e per la viltade siano contrarie a la nobilitade. E qui s'intende viltade per degenerazione, la quale a la nobilitade s'oppone; con ciò sia cosa che l'uno contrario non sia fattore de l'altro nè possa essere, per la prenarrata cagione la quale brevemente s'aggiugne al testo, dicendo: Poi chi pinge figura, [Se non può esser lei, non la può porre]. 11. Onde nullo dipintore potrebbe porre alcuna figura, se intenzionalmente non si facesse prima tale, quale la figura essere dee. Ancora torre non la possono, però che da lungi sono di nobilitade, e per la ragione prenarrata che [ciò che] altera o corrompe alcuna cosa convegna essere congiunto con quella. 12. E però soggiugne: Nè la diritta torre Fa piegar rivo che da lungi corre; che non vuole altro dire, se non rispondere a ciò che detto è dinanzi, che le divizie non possono torre nobilitade, dicendo quasi quella nobilitade essere torre diritta, e le divizie fiume da lungi corrente.

CAPITOLO XI

1. Resta omai solamente a provare come le divizie sono vili, e come disgiunte sono e lontane da nobilitade; e ciò si pruova in due particulette del testo, a le quali si conviene al presente intendere. E poi quelle esposte, sarà manifesto ciò che detto ho, cioè le divizie essere vili e lontane da nobilitade; e per questo saranno le ragioni di sopra contra le divizie perfettamente provate. 2. Dico adunque: Che siano vili appare ed imperfette. E a manifestare ciò che dire s'intende, è da sapere che la viltade di ciascuna cosa da la imperfezione di quella si prende, e così la nobilitade da la perfezione: onde tanto quanto la cosa è perfetta, tanto è in sua natura nobile; quanto imperfetta, tanto vile. E però se le divizie sono imperfette, manifesto è che siano vili. 3. E che elle siano imperfette, brievemente pruova lo testo quando dice: Chè, quantunque collette, Non posson quietar, ma dan più cura; in che non solamente la loro imperfezione è manifesta, ma la loro condizione essere imperfettissima, e però essere quelle vilissime. E ciò testimonia Lucano, quando dice, a quelle parlando: «Sanza contenzione periro le leggi; e voi ricchezze, vilissima parte de le cose, moveste battaglia». 4. Puotesi brevemente la loro imperfezione in tre cose vedere apertamente: e prima, ne lo indiscreto loro avvenimento; secondamente, nel pericoloso loro accrescimento; terziamente, ne la dannosa loro possessione. E prima ch'io ciò dimostri, è da dichiarare un dubbio che pare consurgere: che, con ciò sia cosa che l'oro, le margherite e li campi perfettamente forma e atto abbiano in loro essere, non pare vero dicere che siano imperfette. 5. E però si vuole sapere che, quanto è per esse in loro considerate, cose perfette sono, e non sono ricchezze, ma oro e margherite; ma in quanto sono ordinate a la possessione de l'uomo, sono ricchezze, e per questo modo sono piene d'imperfezione. Chè non è inconveniente una cosa, secondo diversi rispetti, essere perfetta e imperfetta. 6. Dico che la loro imperfezione primamente si può notare ne la indiscrezione del loro avvenimento, nel quale nulla distributiva giustizia risplende, ma tutta iniquitade quasi sempre, la quale iniquitade è proprio effetto d'imperfezione. 7. Che se si considerano li modi per li quali esse vegnono, tutti si possono in tre maniere ricogliere: chè o vengono da pura fortuna, sì come quando sanza intenzione o speranza vegnono per invenzione alcuna non pensata; o vengono da fortuna che è da ragione aiutata, sì come per testamenti o per mutua successione; o vegnono da fortuna aiutatrice di ragione, sì come quando per licito o per illicito procaccio: licito dico, quando è per arte o per mercatantia o per servigio meritante; illicito dico, quando è per furto o per rapina. 8. E in ciascuno di questi tre modi si vede quella iniquitade che io dico, chè più volte a li malvagi che a li

buoni le celate ricchezze che si truovano o che si ritruovano si rappresentano; e questo è sì manifesto, che non ha mestiere di pruova. Veramente io vidi lo luogo, ne le coste d'un monte che si chiama Falterona, in Toscana, dove lo più vile villano di tutta la contrada, zappando, più d'uno staio di santalene d'argento finissimo vi trovò, che forse più di dumilia anni l'aveano aspettato. 9. E per vedere questa iniquitade, disse Aristotile che «quanto l'uomo più subiace a lo 'ntelletto, tanto meno subiace a la fortuna». E dico che più volte a li malvagi che a li buoni pervengono li retaggi, legati e caduti; e di ciò non voglio recare innanzi alcuna testimonianza, ma ciascuno volga li occhi per la sua vicinanza, e vedrà quello che io mi taccio per non abominare alcuno. 10. Così fosse piaciuto a Dio che quello che addomandò lo Provenzale fosse stato, che chi non è reda de la bontade perdesse lo retaggio de l'avere! E dico che più volte a li malvagi che a li buoni pervegnono a punto li procacci; chè li non liciti a li buoni mai non pervegnono, però che li rifiutano. 11. E quale buono uomo mai per forza o per fraude procaccerà? Impossibile sarebbe ciò, chè solo per la elezione de la illicita impresa più buono non sarebbe. E li liciti rade volte pervegnono a li buoni, perchè, con ciò sia cosa che molta sollicitudine quivi si richeggia, e la sollicitudine del buono sia diritta a maggiori cose, rade volte sofficientemente quivi lo buono è sollicito. 12. Per che è manifesto in ciascuno modo quelle ricchezze iniquamente avvenire; e però Nostro Segnore inique le chiamò, quando disse: «Fatevi amici de la pecunia de la iniquitade», invitando e confortando li uomini a liber[ali]tade di benefici, che sono generatori d'amici. 13. E quanto fa bello cambio chi di queste imperfettissime cose dà per avere e per acquistare cose perfette, sì come li cuori de' valenti uomini! Lo cambio ogni die si può fare. Certo nuova mercatantia è questa de l'altre, che, credendo comperare uno uomo per lo beneficio, mille e mille ne sono comperati. 14. E c[u]i non è ancora [ne]l cuore Alessandro per li suoi reali benefici? Cui non è ancora lo buono re di Castella, o il Saladino, o il buono Marchese di Monferrato, o il buono Conte di Tolosa, o Beltramo dal Bornio, o Galasso di Montefeltro? Quando de le loro messioni si fa menzione, certo non solamente quelli che ciò farebbero volentieri, ma quelli prima morire vorrebbero che ciò fare, amore hanno a la memoria di costoro.

CAPITOLO XII

1. Come detto è, la imperfezione de le ricchezze non solamente nel loro avvenimento si può comprendere, ma eziandio nel pericoloso loro accrescimento; e però che in ciò più si può vedere di loro difetto, solo di questo fa menzione lo testo, dicendo quelle, quantunque collette, non solamente non quietare, ma dare più sete e rendere altri più defettivo e insufficiente. 2. E qui si vuole sapere che le cose defettive possono aver li loro difetti per modo, che ne la prima faccia non paiono, ma sotto pretesto di perfezione la imperfezione si nasconde; e possono avere quelli sì, che del tutto sono discoperti, sì che apertamente ne la prima faccia si conosce la imperfezione. 3. E quelle cose che prima non mostrano li loro difetti sono più pericolose, però che di loro, molte fiate prendere guardia non si può; sì come vedemo nel traditore, che ne la faccia dinanzi si mostra amico, sì che fa di sè fede avere, e sotto pretesto d'amistade chiude lo difetto de la inimistade. E per questo modo le ricchezze pericolosamente nel loro accrescimento sono imperfette, che, sommettendo ciò che promettono, apportano lo contrario. 4. Promettono le false traditrici sempre, in certo numero adunate, rendere lo raunatore pieno d'ogni appagamento; e con questa promissione conducono l'umana volontade in vizio d'avarizia. E per questo le chiama Boezio, in quello De Consolatione, pericolose, dicendo: «Ohmè! chi fu quel primo che li pesi de l'oro coperto e le pietre che si voleano ascondere, preziosi pericoli, cavoe?». 5. Promettono le false traditrici, se bene si guarda, di torre ogni sete e ogni mancanza, e apportare ogni saziamento e bastanza; e questo fanno nel principio a ciascuno uomo, questa promissione in certa quantità di loro accrescimento affermando: e poi che quivi sono adunate, in loco di saziamento e di refrigerio danno e recano sete di casso febricante intollerabile; e in loco di bastanza recano nuovo termine, cioè maggiore quantitade a desiderio, e, con questa, paura grande e sollicitudine sopra l'acquisto. Si che veramente non quietano, ma più danno cura, la qual prima sanza loro non si avea. 6. E però dice Tullio in quello De Paradoxo, abominando le ricchezze: «Io in nullo tempo per fermo nè le pecunie di costoro, nè le magioni magnifiche, nè le ricchezze, nè le signorie, nè l'allegrezze de le quali massimamente sono astretti, tra cose buone o desiderabili esser dissi; con ciò sia cosa che certo io vedesse li uomini ne l'abondanza di queste cose massimamente desiderare quelle di che abondano. Però che in nullo tempo si compie nè si sazia la sete de la cupiditate; nè solamente per desiderio d'accrescere quelle cose che hanno si tormentano, ma eziandio tormento hanno ne la paura di perdere quelle». 7. E queste tutte parole sono di Tullio, e così giacciono in quello libro che detto

è. E a maggiore testimonianza di questa imperfezione, ecco Boezio in quello De Consolatione dicente: «Se quanta rena volve lo mare turbato dal vento, se quante stelle rilucono, la dea de la ricchezza largisca, l'umana generazione non cesserà di piangere». 8. E perchè più testimonianza, a ciò ridurre per pruova, si conviene, lascisi stare quanto contra esse Salomone e suo padre grida; quanto contra esse Seneca, massimamente a Lucillo scrivendo; quanto Orazio, quanto Iuvenale e, brievemente, quanto ogni scrittore, ogni poeta; e quanto la verace Scrittura divina chiama contra queste false meretrici, piene di tutti defetti; e pongasi mente, per avere oculata fede, pur a la vita di coloro che dietro a esse vanno, come vivono sicuri quando di quelle hanno raunate, come s'appagano, come si riposano. 9. E che altro cotidianamente pericola e uccide le cittadi, le contrade, le singulari persone, tanto quanto lo nuovo raunamento d'avere appo alcuno? Lo quale raunamento nuovi desiderii discuopre, a lo fine de li quali sanza ingiuria d'alcuno venire non si può. E che altro intende di meditare l'una e l'altra Ragione, Canonica dico e Civile, tanto quanto a riparare a la cupiditade che, raunando ricchezze, cresce? 10. Certo assai lo manifesta e l'una e l'altra Ragione, se li loro cominciamenti, dico de la loro scrittura, si leggono. Oh com'è manifesto, anzi manifestissimo, quelle in accrescendo essere del tutto imperfette, quando di loro altro che imperfezione nascere non può, quanto che accolte siano! E questo è quello che lo testo dice. 11. Veramente qui surge in dubbio una questione, da non trapassare sanza farla e rispondere a quella. Potrebbe dire alcuno calunniatore de la veritade che se, per crescere desiderio acquistando, le ricchezze sono imperfette e però vili, che per questa ragione sia imperfetta e vile la scienza, ne l'acquisto de la quale sempre cresce lo desiderio di quella; onde Seneca dice: «Se l'uno de li piedi avesse nel sepulcro, apprendere vorrei». 12. Ma non è vero che la scienza sia vile per imperfezione: dunque, per la distruzione del consequente, lo crescere desiderio non è cagione di viltade a le ricchezze. Che sia perfetta, è manifesto per lo Filosofo nel sesto de l'Etica, che dice la scienza essere perfetta ragione di certe cose. 13. A questa questione brievemente è da rispondere; ma prima è da vedere se ne l'acquisto de la scienza lo desiderio si sciampia come ne la questione si pone, e se sia per ragione. Per che io dico che non solamente ne l'acquisto de la scienza e de le ricchezze, ma in ciascuno acquisto l'umano desiderio si sciampia, avvegna che per altro e altro modo. 14. E la ragione è questa: che lo sommo desiderio di ciascuna cosa, e prima da la natura dato, è lo ritornare a lo suo principio. E però che Dio è principio de le nostre anime e fattore di quelle simili a sè (sì come è scritto: «Facciamo l'uomo ad imagine e similitudine nostra»), essa anima massimamente desidera di tornare a quello. 15. E sì come peregrino che va per una via per la quale mai non fue, che ogni casa che da lungi vede crede che sia l'albergo, e non

trovando ciò essere, dirizza la credenza a l'altra, e così di casa in casa, tanto che a l'albergo viene; così l'anima nostra, incontanente che nel nuovo e mai non fatto cammino di questa vita entra, dirizza li occhi al termine del suo sommo bene, e però, qualunque cosa vede che paia in sè avere alcuno bene, crede che sia esso. 16. E perchè la sua conoscenza prima è imperfetta, per non essere esperta nè dottrinata, piccioli beni le paiono grandi, e però da quelli comincia prima a desiderare. Onde vedemo li parvuli desiderare massimamente un pomo; e poi, più procedendo, desiderare uno augellino; e poi, più oltre, desiderare bel vestimento; e poi lo cavallo; e poi una donna; e poi ricchezza non grande, e poi grande, e poi più. E questo incontra perchè in nulla di queste cose truova quella che va cercando, e credela trovare più oltre. 17. Per che vedere si può che l'uno desiderabile sta dinanzi a l'altro a li occhi de la nostra anima per modo quasi piramidale, che 'l minimo li cuopre prima tutti, ed è quasi punta de l'ultimo desiderabile, che è Dio, quasi base di tutti. Sì che, quanto da la punta ver la base più si procede, maggiori appariscono li desiderabili; e questa è la ragione per che, acquistando, li desiderii umani si fanno più ampii, l'uno appresso de l'altro. 18. Veramente così questo cammino si perde per errore come le strade de la terra. Che sì come d'una cittade a un'altra di necessitade è una ottima e dirittissima via, e un'altra che sempre se ne dilunga (cioè quella che va ne l'altra parte), e molte altre quale meno allungandosi e quale meno appressandosi, così ne la vita umana sono diversi cammini, de li quali uno è veracissimo e un altro è fallacissimo, e certi meno fallaci e certi meno veraci. 19. E sì come vedemo che quello che dirittissimo vae a la cittade, e compie lo desiderio e dà posa dopo la fatica, e quello che va in contrario mai nol compie e mai posa dare non può, così ne la nostra vita avviene: lo buono camminatore giugne a termine e a posa; lo erroneo mai non l'aggiugne, ma con molta fatica del suo animo sempre con li occhi gulosi si mira innanzi. 20. Onde avvegna che questa ragione del tutto non risponda a la questione mossa di sopra, almeno apre la via a la risposta, chè fa vedere non andare ogni nostro desiderio dilatandosi per un modo. Ma perchè questo capitolo è alquanto produtto, in capitolo nuovo a la questione è da rispondere, nel quale sia terminata tutta la disputazione che fare s'intende al presente contra le ricchezze.

CAPITOLO XIII

1. A la questione rispondendo, dico che propriamente crescere lo desiderio de la scienza dire non si può, avvegna che, come detto è, per alcuno modo si dilati. Chè quello che propriamente cresce, sempre è uno: lo desiderio de la scienza non è sempre uno, ma è molti, e finito l'uno, viene l'altro; sì che, propriamente parlando, non è crescere lo suo dilatare, ma successione di picciola cosa in grande cosa. 2. Che se io desidero di sapere li principii de le cose naturali, incontanente che io so questi, è compiuto e terminato questo desiderio. E se poi io desidero di sapere che cosa e com'è ciascuno di questi principii, questo è un altro desiderio nuovo, nè per l'avvenimento di questo non mi si toglie la perfezione a la quale mi condusse l'altro; e questo cotale dilatare non è cagione d'imperfezione, ma di perfezione maggiore. Quello veramente de la ricchezza è propriamente crescere, chè è sempre pur uno, sì che nulla successione quivi si vede, e per nullo termine e per nulla perfezione. 3. E se l'avversario vuol dire che, sì come è altro desiderio quello di sapere li principii de le cose naturali e altro di sapere che elli sono, così altro desiderio è quello de le cento marche e altro è quello de le mille, rispondo che non è vero; che 'l cento sì è parte del mille, e ha ordine ad esso come parte d'una linea a tutta linea, su per la quale si procede per uno moto solo, e nulla successione quivi è nè perfezione di moto in parte alcuna. 4. Ma conoscere che siano li principii de le cose naturali, e conoscere quello che sia ciascheduno, non è parte l'uno de l'altro, e hanno ordine insieme come diverse linee, per le quali non si procede per uno moto, ma, perfetto lo moto de l'una, succede lo moto de l'altra. 5. E così appare che, dal desiderio de la scienza, la scienza non è da dire imperfetta, sì come le ricchezze sono da dire per lo loro, come la questione ponea; chè nel desiderare de la scienza successivamente finiscono li desiderii e viensi a perfezione, e in quello de la ricchezza no. Sì che la questione è soluta, e non ha luogo. 6. Ben puote ancora calunniare l'avversario dicendo che, avvegna che molti desiderii si compiano ne lo acquisto de la scienza, mai non si viene a l'ultimo: che è quasi simile a la 'mperfezione di quello che non si termina e che è pur uno. 7. Ancora qui si risponde, che non è vero ciò che si oppone, cioè che mai non si viene a l'ultimo: chè li nostri desiderii naturali, sì come di sopra nel terzo trattato è mostrato, sono a certo termine discendenti; e quello de la scienza è naturale, sì che certo termine quello compie, avvegna che pochi, per male camminare, compiano la giornata. 8. E chi intende lo Commentatore nel terzo de l'Anima, questo intende da lui. E però dice Aristotile nel decimo de l'Etica, contra Simonide poeta parlando, che «l'uomo si dee traere a le divine cose quanto

può»; in che mostra che a certo fine bada la nostra potenza. E nel primo de l'Etica dice che «'l disciplinato chiede di sapere certezza ne le cose, secondo che [ne] la loro natura di certezza si riceva»; in che mostra che non solamente da la parte de l'uomo desiderante, ma deesi fine attendere da la parte de lo scibile desiderato. 9. E però Paulo dice: «Non più sapere che sapere si convegna, ma sapere a misura». Sì che, per qualunque modo lo desiderare de la scienza si prende, o generalmente o particularmente, a perfezione viene. E però la scienza ha perfetta e nobile perfezione, e per suo desiderio sua perfezione non perde, come le maladette ricchezze. 10. Le quali come ne la loro possessione siano dannose, brievemente è da mostrare, che è la terza nota de la loro imperfezione. Puotesi vedere la loro possessione essere dannosa per due ragioni: l'una, che è cagione di male; l'altra, che è privazione di bene. Cagione è di male, chè fa, pur vegliando, lo possessore timido e odioso. 11. Quanta paura è quella di colui che appo sè sente ricchezza, in camminando, in soggiornando, non pur vegliando ma dormendo, non pur di perdere l'avere ma la persona per l'avere! Ben lo sanno li miseri mercatanti che per lo mondo vanno, che le foglie che 'l vento fa menare, li fa tremare, quando seco ricchezze portano; e quando sanza esse sono, pieni di sicurtade, cantando e sollazzando fanno loro cammino più brieve. 12. E però dice lo Savio: «Se voto camminatore entrasse ne lo cammino, dinanzi a li ladroni canterebbe». E ciò vuol dire Lucano nel quinto libro, quando commenda la povertà di sicuranza, dicendo: «Oh sicura facultà de la povera vita! oh stretti abitaculi e masserizie! oh non ancora intese ricchezze de li Iddei! A quali tempii o a quali muri poteo questo avvenire, cioè non temere con alcuno tumulto, bussando la mano di Cesare?» E quello dice Lucano quando ritrae come Cesare di notte a la casetta del pescatore Amiclas venne, per passare lo mare Adriano. 13. E quanto odio è quello che ciascuno al possessore de la ricchezza porta, o per invidia o per desiderio di prendere quella possessione! Certo tanto è, che molte volte contra la debita pietade lo figlio a la morte del padre intende: e di questo grandissime e manifestissime esperienze possono avere li Latini, e da la parte di Po e da la parte di Tevero! E però Boezio nel secondo de la sua Consolazione dice: «Per certo l'avarizia fa li uomini odiosi». 14. Anche è privazione di bene la loro possessione. Chè, possedendo quelle, larghezza non si fa, che è vertude ne la quale è perfetto bene e la quale fa li uomini splendienti e amati; che non può essere possedendo quelle, ma quelle lasciando di possedere. Onde Boezio nel medesimo libro dice: «Allora è buona la pecunia, quando, transmutata ne li altri per uso di larghezza, più non si possiede». Per che assai è manifesto la loro viltade per tutte le sue note. 15. E però l'uomo di diritto appetito e di vera conoscenza quelle mai non ama, e, non amandole, non si unisce ad esse, ma quelle sempre di lungi da sè essere vuole, se non in quanto ad alcuno necessario

servigio sono ordinate. Ed è cosa ragionevole, però che lo perfetto con lo imperfetto non si può congiugnere; onde vedemo che la torta linea con la diritta non si congiunge mai, e se alcuno congiungimento v'è, non è da linea a linea, ma da punto a punto. 16. E però seguita che l'animo che è diritto, cioè d'appetito, e verace, cioè di conoscenza, per loro perdita non si disface; sì come lo testo pone nel fine di questa parte. E per questo effetto intende di provare lo testo che elle siano fiume corrente di lungi da la diritta torre de la ragione, o vero di nobilitade; e per questo, che esse divizie non possono torre la nobilitade a chi l'ha. E per questo modo disputasi e ripruovasi contra le ricchezze per la presente canzone.

CAPITOLO XIV

1. Riprovato l’altrui errore quanto è in quella parte che a le ricchezze s’appoggiava, [seguita che si riprovi quanto è] in quella parte, che tempo diceva essere cagione di nobilitade, dicendo antica ricchezza. E questa riprovagione si fa in quella parte che comincia: Nè voglion che vil uom gentil divegna. 2. E in prima si ripruova ciò per una ragione di costoro medesimi che così errano; poi, a maggiore loro confusione, questa loro ragione anche si distrugge: e ciò si fa quando dice: Ancor, segue di ciò che innanzi ho messo. Ultimamente conchiude manifesto essere lo loro errore, e però essere tempo d’intendere a la veritade: e ciò si fa quando dice: Per che a ‘ntelletti sani. 3. Dico adunque: Nè voglion che vil uom gentil divegna. Dove è da sapere che oppinione di questi erranti è che uomo prima villano mai gentile uomo dicer non si possa; nè uomo che figlio sia di villano similemente dicere mai non si possa gentile. E ciò rompe la loro sentenza medesima, quando dicono che tempo si richiede a nobilitade, ponendo questo vocabulo ‘antico’; però ch’è impossibile per processo di tempo venire a la generazione di nobilitade per questa loro ragione che detta è, la quale toglie via che villano uomo mai possa esser gentile per opera che faccia, o per alcuno accidente, e toglie via la mutazione di villano padre in gentile figlio. 4. Chè se lo figlio del villano è pur villano, e lo figlio fia pur figlio di villano e così fia anche villano, e anche suo figlio, e così sempre, e mai non s’avrà a trovare là dove nobilitade per processo di tempo si cominci. 5. E se l’avversario, volendosi difendere, dicesse che la nobilitade si comincerà in quel tempo che si dimenticherà lo basso stato de li antecessori, rispondo che ciò fia contra loro medesimi, che pur di necessitade quivi sarà transmutazione di viltade in gentilezza, d’un uomo in altro o di padre a figlio, ch’è contra ciò che essi pongono. 6. E se l’avversario pertinacemente si difendesse, dicendo che bene vogliono questa transmutazione potersi fare quando lo basso stato de li antecessori corre in oblivione, avvegna che ‘l testo ciò non curi, degno è che la chiosa a ciò risponda. E però rispondo così: che di ciò che dicono seguitano quattro grandissimi inconvenienti, sì che buona ragione essere non può. 7. L’uno si è che quanto la natura umana fosse migliore tanto sarebbe più malagevole e più tarda generazione di gentilezza; che è massimo inconveniente, con ciò sia cosa, com’ho no[t]ato, che la cosa quanto è migliore tanto è più cagione di bene; e nobilitade intra li beni sia commemorata. 8. E che ciò fosse così si pruova. Se la gentilezza o ver nobilitade, che per una cosa intendo, si generasse per oblivione, più tosto sarebbe generata la nobilitade quanto li uomini fossero più smemorati, [chè] tanto più tosto ogni oblivione verrebbe. Dunque, quanto li

uomini smemorati più fossero, più tosto sarebbero nobili; e per contrario, quanto con più buona memoria, tanto più tardi nobili si farebbero. 9. Lo secondo si è, che ‘n nulla cosa, fuori de li uomini, questa distinzione si potrebbe fare, cioè nobile o vile; che è molto inconveniente, con ciò sia cosa che in ciascuna spezie di cose veggiamo l’imagine di nobilitade e di viltade: onde spesse volte diciamo uno nobile cavallo e uno vile, e uno nobile falcone e uno vile, e una nobile margherita e una vile. 10. E che non si potesse fare questa distinzione, così si pruova. Se l’oblivione de li bassi antecessori è cagione di nobilitade, e là ovunque bassezza d’antecessori mai non fu, non può essere l’oblivione di quelli - con ciò sia cosa che l’oblivione sia corruzione di memoria, e in questi altri animali e piante e minere bassezza e altezza non si noti, però che in uno sono naturati solamente ed iguale stato -, in loro generazione di nobilitade essere non può; e così nè viltade, con ciò sia cosa che l’una e l’altra si guardi come abito e privazione, che sono ad uno medesimo subietto possibili; e però in loro de l’una e de l’altra non potrebbe essere distinzione. 11. E se l’avversario volesse dicere che ne l’altre cose nobilità s’intende per la bontà de la cosa, ma ne li uomini s’intende perchè di sua bassa condizione non è memoria, rispondere si vorrebbe non con le parole ma col coltello a tanta bestialitade, quanta è dare a la nobilitade de l’altre cose bontade per cagione, e a quella de li uomini principio di dimenticanza. 12. Lo terzo si è che molte volte verrebbe prima lo generato che lo generante; che è del tutto impossibile; e ciò si può così mostrare. Pognamo che Gherardo da Cammino fosse stato nepote del più vile villano che mai bevesse del Sile o del Cagnano, e la oblivione ancora non fosse del suo avolo venuta: chi sarà oso di dire che Gherardo da Cammino fosse vile uomo? e chi non parlerà meco, dicendo quello essere stato nobile? Certo nullo, quanto vuole sia presuntuoso, però che egli fu, e fia sempre la sua memoria. 13. E se la oblivione del suo basso antecessore non fosse venuta, sì come si suppone, ed ello fosse grande di nobilitade e la nobilitade in lui si vedesse così apertamente come aperta si vede, prima sarebbe stata in lui che ‘l generante suo fosse stato: e questo è massimamente impossibile. 14. Lo quarto si è che tale uomo sarebbe tenuto nobile morto che non fu nobile vivo; che più inconveniente essere non potrebbe; e ciò così si mostra. Pognamo che ne la etade di Dardano de’ suoi antecessori bassi fosse memoria, e pognamo che ne la etade di Laomedonte questa memoria fosse disfatta, e venuta l’oblivione. Secondo l’oppinione avversa, Laomedonte fu gentile e Dardano fu villano in loro vita. Noi, a li quali la memoria de li loro anticessori, dico di là da Dardano, [anche non è rimasa, dir dovremmo che Dardano] vivendo fosse villano e morto sia nobile. 15. E non è contro a ciò, che si dice Dardano esser stato figlio di Giove, chè ciò è favola, de la quale, filosoficamente disputando, curare non si dee; e pur se volesse a la

favola fermare l’avversario, di certo quello che la favola cuopre disfà tutte le sue ragioni. E così è manifesto, la ragione che ponea la oblivione causa di nobilitade essere falsa ed erronea.

CAPITOLO XV

1. Da poi che, per la loro medesima sentenza, la canzone ha riprovato tempo non richiedersi a nobilitade, incontanente seguita a confondere la premessa loro oppinione, acciò che di loro false ragioni nulla ruggine rimagna ne la mente che a la verità sia disposta; e questo fa quando dice: Ancor, segue di ciò che innanzi ho messo. 2. Ove è da sapere che, se uomo non si può fare di villano gentile o di vile padre non può nascere gentile figlio, sì come messo è dinanzi per loro oppinione, che de li due inconvenienti l'uno seguire conviene: l'uno sì è che nulla nobilitade sia; l'altro sì è che 'l mondo sempre sia stato con più uomini, sì che da uno solo la umana generazione discesa non sia. 3. E ciò si può mostrare. Se nobilitade non si genera di nuovo, sì come più volte è detto che la loro oppinione vuole (non generandosi di vile uomo in lui medesimo, nè di vile padre in figlio), sempre è l'uomo tale quale nasce, e tale nasce quale è lo padre; e così questo processo d'una condizione è venuto infino dal primo parente: per che tale quale fu lo primo generante, cioè Adamo, conviene essere tutta l'umana generazione, chè da lui a li moderni non si puote trovare per quella ragione alcuna transmutanza. 4. Dunque, se esso Adamo fu nobile, tutti siamo nobili, e se esso fu vile, tutti siamo vili; che non è altro che torre via la distinzione di queste condizioni, e così è torre via quelle. E questo dice, che di quello ch'e messo dinanzi seguita che siam tutti gentili o ver villani. 5. E se questo non è, [e] pur alcuna gente è da dire nobile e alcuna è da dir vile, di necessitade, da poi che la transmutazione di viltade in nobilitade è tolta via, conviene l'umana generazione da diversi principii essere discesa, cioè da uno nobile e da uno vile. E ciò dice la canzone, quando dice: O che non fosse ad uom cominciamento, cioè uno solo: non dice 'cominciamenti'. E questo è falsissimo appo lo Filosofo, appo la nostra Fede che mentire non puote, appo la legge e credenza antica de li Gentili. 6. Chè, avvegna che 'l Filosofo non pogna lo processo da uno primo uomo, pur vuole una sola essenza essere in tutti li uomini, la quale diversi principii avere non puote; e Plato vuole che tutti li uomini da una sola Idea dependano, e non da più, che è dare loro uno solo principio. E sanza dubbio forte riderebbe Aristotile udendo fare spezie due de l'umana generazione, sì come de li cavalli e de li asini; che, perdonimi Aristotile, asini ben si possono dire coloro che così pensano. 7. Che appo la nostra fede, la quale del tutto è da conservare, sia falsissimo, per Salomone si manifesta, che là dove distinzione fa di tutti li uomini a li animali bruti, chiama quelli tutti figli d'Adamo; e ciò fa quando dice: «Chi sa se li spiriti de li figliuoli d'Adamo vadano suso, e quelli de le bestie vadano giuso?». 8. E che appo li Gentili falso fosse, ecco la testimonianza

d’Ovidio nel primo del suo Metamorfoseos, dove tratta la mondiale constituzione secondo la credenza pagana, o vero de li Gentili, dicendo: «Nato è l’uomo» - non disse ‘li uomini’; disse ‘nato’, e ‘l’uomo’ - «o vero che questo l’artefice de le cose di seme divino fece, o vero che la recente terra, di poco dipartita dal nobile corpo sottile e diafano, li semi del cognato cielo ritenea. La quale, mista con l’acqua del fiume, lo figlio di Iapeto, cioè Prometeus, compuose in imagine de li Dei, che tutto governano». Dove manifestamente pone lo primo uomo uno solo essere stato. 9. E però dice la canzone: Ma ciò io non consento, cioè che cominciamento ad uomo non fosse. E soggiugne la canzone: Ned ellino altressì, se son cristiani: e dice ‘cristiani’ e non ‘filosofi’ o vero ‘Gentili’, [de li quali] le sentenze anco [non] sono in contro, però che la cristiana sentenza è di maggiore vigore, ed è rompitrice d’ogni calunnia, mercè de la somma luce del cielo che quella allumina. 10. Poi quando dico: Per che a ‘ntelletti sani È manifesto i lor diri esser vani, conchiudo lo loro errore essere confuso, e dico che tempo è d’aprire li occhi a la veritade; questo dice quando dico: E dicer voglio omai, sì com’io sento. Dico adunque che, per quello che detto è, è manifesto a li sani intelletti che i detti di costoro sono vani, cioè sanza midolla di veritade. E dico sani non sanza cagione. 11. Onde è da sapere che lo nostro intelletto si può dir sano e infermo: e dico intelletto per la nobile parte de l’anima nostra, che con uno vocabulo ‘mente’ si può chiamare. Sano dire si può, quando per malizia d’animo o di corpo impedito non è ne la sua operazione; che è conoscere quello che le cose sono, sì come vuole Aristotile nel terzo de l’Anima. 12. Chè, secondo la malizia de l’anima, tre orribili infermitadi ne la mente de li uomini ho vedute. L’una è di naturale [jat]tanza causata: chè sono molti tanto presuntuosi, che si credono tutto sapere, e per questo le non certe cose affermano per certe; lo qual vizio Tullio massimamente abomina nel primo de li Offici e Tommaso nel suo Contra-li-Gentili dicendo: «Sono molti tanto di suo ingegno presuntuosi, che credono col suo intelletto poter misurare tutte le cose, estimando tutto vero quello che a loro pare, falso quello che a loro non pare». 13. E quinci nasce che mai a dottrina non vegnono; credendo da sè sufficientemente essere dottrinati, mai non domandano, mai non ascoltano, disiano essere domandati e, anzi la domandagione compiuta, male rispondono. E per costoro dice Salomone ne li Proverbii: «Vedesti l’uomo ratto a rispondere? di lui stoltezza, più che correzione, è da [sperare]». 14. L’altra è di naturale pusillanimitade causata: chè sono molti tanto vilmente ostinati, che non possono credere che nè per loro nè per altrui si possano le cose sapere; e questi cotali mai per loro non cercano nè ragionano, mai quello che altri dice non curano. E contra costoro Aristotile parla nel primo de l’Etica, dicendo quelli essere insufficienti uditori de la morale filosofia. Costoro sempre come bestie in grossezza vivono,

d’ogni dottrina disperati. 15. La terza è da levitade di natura causata: chè sono molti di sì lieve fantasia che in tutte le loro ragioni transvanno, e anzi che silogizzino hanno conchiuso, e di quella conclusione vanno transvolando ne l’altra, e pare loro sottilissimamente argomentare, e non si muovono da neuno principio, e nulla cosa veramente veggiono vera nel loro imaginare. 16. E di costoro dice lo Filosofo che non è da curare nè da avere con essi faccenda, dicendo nel primo de la Fisica, che «contra quelli che niega li principii disputare non si conviene». E di questi cotali sono molti idioti che non saprebbero l’a. b. c., e vorrebbero disputare in geometria, in astrologia e in fisica. 17. E secondo malizia, o vero difetto di corpo, può essere la mente non sana: quando per difetto d’alcuno principio da la nativitade, sì come [ne’] mentecatti; quando per l’alterazione del cerebro, sì come sono frenetici. E di questa infertade de la mente intende la legge, quando lo Inforzato dice: «In colui che fa testamento, di quel tempo nel quale lo testamento fa, sanitade di mente, non di corpo, è a domandare». Per che a quelli intelletti che per malizia d’animo o di corpo infermi non sono, liberi, espediti e sani a la luce de la veritade, dico essere manifesto l’oppinione de la gente, che detto è, essere vana, cioè sanza valore. 18. Appresso soggiugne, che io così li giudico falsi e vani, e così li ripruovo; e ciò si fa quando si dice: E io così per falsi li riprovo. E appresso dico che da venire è a la veritade mostrare; e dico che mostrare [è] quello, cioè che cosa è gentilezza, e come si può conoscere l’uomo in cui essa è. E ciò dico quivi: E dicer voglio omai, sì com’io sento.

CAPITOLO XVI

1. «Lo rege si letificherà in Dio, e saranno lodati tutti quelli che giurano in lui, però che serrata è la bocca di coloro che parlano le inique cose». Queste parole posso io qui veramente proponere; però che ciascuno vero rege dee massimamente amare la veritade. Ond'è scritto nel libro di Sapienza: «Amate lo lume di sapienza, voi che siete dinanzi a li populi»; e lume di sapienza è essa veritade. Dico adunque che però si rallegrerà ogni rege che riprovata è la falsissima e dannosissima oppinione de li malvagi e ingannati uomini che di nobilitade hanno infino a ora iniquamente parlato. 2. Convienesi procedere al trattato de la veritade, secondo la divisione fatta nel terzo capitolo di questo trattato. Questa seconda parte adunque, che comincia: Dico ch'ogni vertù principalmente, intende diterminare d'essa nobilitade secondo la veritade; e partesi questa parte in due: che ne la prima s'intende mostrare che è questa nobilitade; ne la seconda s'intende mostrare come conoscere si puote colui dov'ella è: e comincia questa parte seconda: L'anima cui adorna esta bontate. 3. La prima parte ha due parti ancora: che ne la prima si cercano certe cose che sono mestiere a veder la diffinizione di nobilitade; ne la seconda si cerca de la sua diffinizione: e comincia questa seconda parte: È gentilezza dovunqu'è vertute. 4. A perfettamente entrare per lo trattato è prima da vedere due cose: l'una, che per questo vocabulo 'nobilitade' s'intende, solo semplicemente considerato; l'altra è per che via sia da camminare a cercare la prenominata diffinizione. Dico adunque che, se volemo riguardo avere de la comune consuetudine di parlare, per questo vocabulo 'nobilitade' s'intende perfezione di propria natura in ciascuna cosa. 5. Onde non pur de l'uomo è predicata, ma eziandio di tutte cose - chè l'uomo chiama nobile pietra, nobile pianta, nobile cavallo, nobile falcone - qualunque in sua natura si vede essere perfetta. E però dice Salomone ne lo Ecclesiastes: «Beata la terra lo cui re è nobile», che non è altro a dire, se non lo cui rege è perfetto, secondo la perfezione de l'animo e del corpo; e così manifesta per quello che dice dinanzi quando dice: «Guai a te, terra, lo cui rege è pargolo», cioè non perfetto uomo: e non è pargolo uomo pur per etade, ma per costumi disordinati e per difetto di vita, sì come n'ammaestra lo Filosofo nel primo de l'Etica. 6. Bene sono alquanti folli che credono che per questo vocabulo 'nobile' s'intenda 'essere da molti nominato e conosciuto', e dicono che viene da uno verbo che sta per conoscere, cioè 'nosco'. E questo è falsissimo; chè, se ciò fosse, quali cose più fossero nomate e conosciute in loro genere, più sarebbero in loro genere nobili: e così la guglia di San Piero sarebbe la più nobile pietra del mondo; e Asdente, lo calzolaio da Parma, sarebbe più

nobile che alcuno suo cittadino; e Albuino de la Scala sarebbe più nobile che Guido da Castello di Reggio: che ciascuna di queste cose è falsissima. E però è falsissimo che ‘nobile’ vegna da ‘conoscere’, ma viene da ‘non vile’; onde ‘nobile’ è quasi ‘non vile’. 7. Questa perfezione intende lo Filosofo nel settimo de la Fisica quando dice: «Ciascuna cosa è massimamente perfetta quando tocca e aggiugne la sua virtude propria, e allora è massimamente secondo sua natura; onde allora lo circulo si può dicere perfetto quando veramente è circulo», cioè quando aggiugne la sua propria virtude; e allora è in tutta sua natura, e allora si può dire nobile circulo. 8. E questo è quando in esso è uno punto lo quale equalmente distante sia da la circunferenza, sua virtute part[icular]e; per[ò] lo circulo che ha figura d’uovo non è nobile, nè quello che ha figura di presso che piena luna, però che non è in quello sua natura perfetta. E così manifestamente vedere si può che generalmente questo vocabulo, cioè nobilitade, dice in tutte cose perfezione di loro natura: e questo è quello che primamente si cerca, per meglio entrare nel trattato de la parte che esponere s’intende. 9. Secondamente è da vedere come da camminare è a trovare la diffinizione de l’umana nobilitade, a la quale intende lo presente processo. Dico adunque che, con ciò sia cosa che in quelle cose che sono d’una spezie, sì come sono tutti li uomini, non si può per li principii essenziali la loro ottima perfezione diffinire, conviensi quella e diffinire e conoscere per li loro effetti. 10. E però si legge nel Vangelio di santo Matteo - quando dice Cristo: «Guardatevi da li falsi profeti» -: «A li frutti loro conoscerete quelli». E per lo cammino diritto è da vedere, questa diffinizione che cercando si vae, per li frutti: che sono morali vertù e intellettuali, de le quali essa nostra nobilitade è seme, sì come ne la sua diffinizione sarà pienamente manifesto. E queste sono quelle due cose che vedere si convenia prima che ad altre si procedesse, sì come in questo capitolo di sopra si dice.

CAPITOLO XVII

1. Appresso che vedute sono quelle due cose che parevano utili a vedere prima che sopra lo testo si procedesse, ad esso esponere è da procedere. E dice e comincia adunque: Dico ch'ogni vertù principalmente Vien da una radice: Vertute, dico, che fa l'uom felice In sua operazione. E soggiungo: Questo è, secondo che l'Etica dice, Un abito eligente, ponendo tutta la diffinizione de la morale virtù, secondo che nel secondo de l'Etica è per lo Filosofo diffinito. 2. In che due cose principalmente s'intende: l'una è che ogni vertù vegna d'uno principio; l'altra sì è che queste ogni vertù siano le vertù morali, di cui si parla; e ciò si manifesta quando dice: Questo è, secondo che l'Etica dice. Dove è da sapere che propiissimi nostri frutti sono le morali vertudi, però che da ogni canto sono in nostra podestade. 3. E queste diversamente da diversi filosofi sono distinte e numerate; ma però che in quella parte dove aperse la bocca la divina sentenza d'Aristotile da lasciare mi pare ogni altrui sentenza, volendo dire quali queste sono, brevemente secondo la sua sentenza trapasserò di quelle ragionando. 4. Queste sono undici vertudi dal detto Filosofo nomate. La prima si chiama Fortezza, la quale è arme e freno a moderare l'audacia e la timiditate nostra, ne le cose che sono corr[u]zione de la nostra vita. La seconda è Temperanza, che è regola e freno de la nostra gulositade e de la nostra soperchievole astinenza ne le cose che conservano la nostra vita. La terza si è Liberalitade, la quale è moderatrice del nostro dare e del nostro ricevere le cose temporali. 5. La quarta si è Magnificenza, la quale è moderatrice de le grandi spese, quelle facendo e sostenendo a certo termine. La quinta si è Magnanimitade, la quale è moderatrice e acquistatrice de' grandi onori e fama. La sesta si è Amativa d'onore, la quale è moderatrice e ordina noi a li onori di questo mondo. La settima si è Mansuetudine, la quale modera la nostra ira e la nostra troppa pazienza contra li nostri mali esteriori. 6. L'ottava si è Affabilitade, la quale fa noi ben convenire con li altri. La nona si è chiamata Veritade, la quale modera noi dal vantare noi oltre che siamo e da lo diminuire noi oltre che siamo, in nostro sermone. La decima si è chiamata Eutrapelia, la quale modera noi ne li sollazzi facendo, quelli usando debitamente. L'undecima si è Giustizia, la quale ordina noi ad amare e operare dirittura in tutte cose. 7. E ciascuna di queste vertudi ha due inimici collaterali, cioè vizii, uno in troppo e un altro in poco; e queste tutte sono li mezzi intra quelli, e nascono tutte da uno principio, cioè da l'abito de la nostra buona elezione: onde generalmente si può dicere di tutte che siano abito elettivo consistente nel mezzo. 8. E queste sono quelle che fanno l'uomo beato, o vero felice, ne la loro operazione, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel

primo de l’Etica quando diffinisce la Felicitade, dicendo che «Felicitade è operazione secondo virtude in vita perfetta». Bene si pone Prudenza, cioè senno, per molti, essere morale virtude, ma Aristotile dinumera quella intra le intellettuali; avvegna che essa sia conduttrice de le morali virtù e mostri la via per ch’elle si compongono e sanza quella essere non possono. 9. Veramente è da sapere che noi potemo avere in questa vita due felicitadi, secondo due diversi cammini, buono e ottimo, che a ciò ne menano: l’una è la vita attiva, e l’altra la contemplativa; la quale, avvegna che per l’attiva si pervegna, come detto è, a buona felicitade, ne mena ad ottima felicitade e beatitudine, secondo che pruova lo Filosofo nel decimo de l’Etica. 10. E Cristo l’afferma con la sua bocca, nel Vangelio di Luca, parlando a Marta, e rispondendo a quella: «Marta, Marta, sollicita se’ e turbiti intorno a molte cose: certamente una cosa è necessaria», cioè ‘quello che fai’. E soggiugne: «Maria ottima parte ha eletta, la quale non le sarà tolta». E Maria, secondo che dinanzi è scritto a queste parole del Vangelio, a’ piedi di Cristo sedendo, nulla cura del ministerio de la casa mostrava; ma solamente le parole del Salvatore ascoltava. 11. Che se moralemente ciò volemo esponere, volse lo nostro Segnore in ciò mostrare che la contemplativa vita fosse ottima, tutto che buona fosse l’attiva: ciò è manifesto a chi ben vuole porre mente a le evangeliche parole. Potrebbe alcuno però dire, contra me argomentando: ‘Poichè la felicitade de la vita contemplativa è più eccellente che quella de l’attiva, e l’una e l’altra possa essere e sia frutto e fine di nobilitade, perchè non anzi si procedette per la via de le virtù intellettuali che de le morali?’ 12. A ciò si può brievemente rispondere che in ciascuna dottrina si dee avere rispetto a la facultà del discente, e per quella via menarlo che più a lui sia lieve. Onde, perciò che le virtù morali paiano essere e siano più comuni e più sapute e più richieste che l’altre e [im]itate ne lo aspetto di fuori, utile e convenevole fu più per quello cammino procedere che per l’altro; chè così bene [non] si verrebbe a la conoscenza de le api per lo frutto de la cera ragionando come per lo frutto del mele, tutto che l’uno e l’altro da loro procede.

CAPITOLO XVIII

1. Nel precedente capitolo è diterminato come ogni vertù morale viene da uno principio, cioè buona e abituale elezione; e ciò importa lo testo presente infino a quella parte che comincia: Dico che nobiltate in sua ragione. 2. In questa parte adunque si procede per via probabile a sapere che ogni sopra detta virtude, singularmente o ver generalmente presa, proceda da nobilitade sì come effetto da sua cagione. E fondasi sopra una proposizione filosofica, che dice che quando due cose si truovano convenire in una, che ambo queste si deono riducere ad alcuno terzo, o vero l'una a l'altra, sì come effetto a cagione; però che una cosa avuta prima e per sè non può essere se non da uno: e se quelle non fossero ambedue effetto d'un terzo, o vero l'una de l'altra, ambedue avrebbero quella cosa prima e per sè, ch'è impossibile. 3. Dice adunque che nobilitade e vertute cotale, cioè morale, convegnono in questo, che l'una e l'altra importa loda di colui di cui si dice; e dico ciò quando dice: Per che in medesmo detto Convegnono ambedue, ch'en d'uno effetto, cioè lodare e rendere pregiato colui cui esser si dicono. E poi conchiude prendendo la vertude de la sopra notata proposizione, e dice che però conviene l'una procedere da l'altra, o vero ambe da un terzo; e soggiunge che più tosto è da presummere l'una venire da l'altra, che ambe da terzo, s'elli appare che l'una vaglia quanto l'altra, e più ancora; e ciò dice: Ma se l'una val ciò che l'altra vale. 4. Ove è da sapere che qui non si procede per necessaria dimostrazione, sì come sarebbe a dire, se lo freddo è generativo de l'acqua, e noi vedemo li nuvoli [generare acqua, che lo freddo è generativo de li nuvoli]; sì di bella e convenevole induzione, che se in noi sono più cose laudabili, [e] in noi è lo principio de le nostre lodi, ragionevole è queste a questo principio riducere; e quello che comprende più cose, più ragionevolemente si dee dire principio di quelle, che quelle principio di lui. 5. Chè lo piè de l'albero, che tutti li altri rami comprende, si dee principio dire e cagione di quelli, e non quelli di lui; e così nobilitade, [che] comprende ogni vertude, sì come cagione effetto comprende, [e] molte altre nostre operazioni laudabili, si dee avere per tale, che la vertude sia da ridurre ad essa prima che ad altro terzo che in noi sia. 6. Ultimamente dice, che quello ch'è detto (cioè, che ogni vertù morale vegna da una radice, e che vertù cotale e nobilitade convegnano in una cosa, come detto è di sopra; e che però si convegna l'una reducere a l'altra, o vero ambe ad uno terzo; e che se l'una vale quello che l'altra e più, di quella [questa] proceda maggiormente che d'altro terzo), tutto sia per supposto, cioè ordito e apparecchiato a quello che per innanzi s'intende. E così termina questo verso e questa presente parte.

CAPITOLO XIX

1. Poi che ne la precedente parte sono pertrattate certe cose e diterminate, ch'erano necessarie a vedere come diffinire si possa questa buona cosa di che si parla, procedere si conviene a la seguente parte, che comincia: È gentilezza dovunqu'è vertute. 2. E questa si vuole in due parti reducere: ne la prima si pruova certa cosa che dinanzi è toccata e lasciata non provata; ne la seconda, conchiudendo, si truova questa diffinizione che cercando si va. E comincia questa seconda parte: Dunque verrà, come dal nero il perso. 3. Ad evidenza de la prima parte, da reducere a memoria è che di sopra si dice che se nobilitade vale e si stende più che vertute, [vertute] più tosto procederà da essa. La qual cosa ora in questa parte pruova, cioè che nobilitade più si stenda; e rende essemplo del cielo, dicendo che dovunque è vertude, quivi è nobilitade. 4. E quivi si vuole sapere che, sì come scritto è in Ragione e per regola di Ragione si tiene, in quelle cose che per sè sono manifeste non è mestiere di pruova; e nulla n'è più manifesta che nobilitade essere dove è vertude, e ciascuna cosa volgarmente vedemo, in sua natura [virtuosa], nobile esser chiamata. 5. Dice dunque: Sì com'è 'l cielo dovunqu'è la stella, e non è questo vero e converso, cioè rivolto, che dovunque è cielo sia la stella, così è nobilitade dovunque è vertude, e non vertude dovunque nobilitade: e con bello e convenevole essemplo, chè veramente è cielo ne lo quale molte e diverse stelle rilucono. Riluce in essa le intellettuali e le morali virtudi; riluce in essa le buone disposizioni da natura date, cioè pietade e religione, e le laudabili passioni, cioè vergogna e misericordia e altre molte; riluce in essa le corporali bontadi, cioè bellezza, fortezza e quasi perpetua valitudine. 6. E tante sono le sue stelle, che [n]el cielo si stendono, che certo non è da maravigliare se molti e diversi frutti fanno ne la umana nobilitade; tante sono le nature e le potenze di quella, in una sotto una semplice sustanza comprese e adunate, ne le quali sì come in diversi rami fruttifica diversamente. Certo da dovvero ardisco a dire che la nobilitade umana, quanto è da la parte di molti suoi frutti, quella de l'angelo soperchia, tutto che l'angelica in sua unitade sia più divina. 7. Di questa nobilitade nostra, che in tanti e tali frutti fruttificava, s'accorse lo Salmista, quando fece quel Salmo che comincia: «Segnore nostro Iddio, quanto è ammirabile lo nome tuo ne l'universa terra!», là dove commenda l'uomo, quasi maravigliandosi del divino affetto in essa umana creatura, dicendo: «Che cosa è l'uomo, che tu, Dio, lo visiti? Tu l'hai fatto poco minore che li angeli, di gloria e d'onore l'hai coronato, e posto lui sopra l'opere de le mani tue». Veramente dunque bella e convenevole comparazione fu del cielo a l'umana nobilitade. 8. Poi quando dice: E noi in

donna e in età novella, pruova ciò che dico, mostrando che la nobilitade si stenda in parte dove virtù non sia. E dice poi: vedem questa salute: e tocca nobilitade, che bene è vera salute, essere là dove è vergogna, cioè tema di disnoranza, sì come è ne le donne e ne li giovani, dove la vergogna è buona e laudabile; la qual vergogna non è virtù, ma certa passione buona. 9. E dice: E noi in donna e in età novella, cioè in giovani; però che, secondo che vuole lo Filosofo nel quarto de l'Etica, «vergogna non è laudabile nè sta bene ne li vecchi e ne li uomini studiosi», però che a loro si conviene di guardare da quelle cose che a vergogna li conducano. 10. A li giovani e a le donne non è tanto richesto di c[au]tela, e però in loro è laudabile la paura del disnore ricevere per la colpa; che da nobilitade viene, e nobilitade si puote credere e in loro chiamare, sì come viltade e ignobilitade la sfacciatezza. Onde buono e ottimo segno di nobilitade è ne li pargoli e imperfetti d'etade, quando dopo lo fallo nel viso loro vergogna si dipinge, che è allora frutto di vera nobilitade.

CAPITOLO XX

1. Quando appresso seguita: Dunque verrà, come dal nero il perso, procede lo testo a la diffinizione di nobilitade, la qual si cerca, e per la quale si potrà vedere che è questa nobilitade di che tanta gente erroneamente parla. Dice dunque, conchiudendo da quello che dinanzi detto è: dunque ogni vertude, o vero il gener loro, cioè l'abito elettivo consistente nel mezzo, verrà da questa, cioè nobilitade. 2. E rende essemplo ne li colori, dicendo: sì come lo perso dal nero discende, così questa, cioè vertude, discende da nobilitade. Lo perso è uno colore misto di purpureo e di nero, ma vince lo nero, e da lui si dinomina; e così la vertù è una cosa mista di nobilitade e di passione; ma perchè la nobilitade vince in quella, è la vertù dinominata da essa, e appellata bontade. 3. Poi appresso argomenta, per quello che detto è, che nessuno, per poter dire: 'Io sono di cotale schiatta', non dee credere essere con essa, se questi frutti non sono in lui. E rende incontanente ragione, dicendo che quelli che hanno questa grazia, cioè questa divina cosa, sono quasi come dei, sanza macula di vizio; e ciò dare non può se non Iddio solo, appo cui non è scelta di persone, sì come le divine Scritture manifestano. 4. E non paia troppo alto dire ad alcuno, quando si dice: Ch'elli son quasi dei; chè, sì come di sopra nel settimo capitolo del terzo trattato si ragiona, così come uomini sono vilissimi e bestiali, così uomini sono nobilissimi e divini, e ciò pruova Aristotile nel settimo de l'Etica per lo testo d'Omero poeta. 5. Sì che non dica quelli de li Uberti di Fiorenza, nè quelli de li Visconti da Melano: 'Perch'io sono di cotale schiatta, io sono nobile'; chè 'l divino seme non cade in ischiatta, cioè in istirpe, ma cade ne le singulari persone, e, sì come di sotto si proverà, la stirpe non fa le singulari persone nobili, ma le singulari persone fanno nobile la stirpe. 6. Poi, quando dice: Chè solo Iddio a l'anima la dona, ragione è del suscettivo, cioè del subietto dove questo divino dono discende: ch'è bene divino dono, secondo la parola de l'Apostolo: «Ogni ottimo dato e ogni dono perfetto di suso viene, discendendo dal padre de' lumi». 7. Dice adunque che Dio solo porge questa grazia a l'anima di quelli cui vede stare perfettamente ne la sua persona, acconcio e disposto a questo divino atto ricevere. Chè, secondo dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Anima, «le cose convengono essere disposte a li loro agenti, e a ricevere li loro atti»; onde se l'anima è imperfettamente posta, non è disposta a ricevere questa benedetta e divina infusione: sì come se una pietra margarita è male disposta, o vero imperfetta, la vertù celestiale ricever non può, sì come disse quel nobile Guido Guinizzelli in una sua canzone, che comincia: Al cor gentil ripara sempre Amore. 8. Puote adunque l'anima stare non bene ne la persona per manco di complessione, o forse per manco di temporale: e in

questa cotale questo raggio divino mai non risplende. E possono dire questi cotali, la cui anima è privata di questo lume, che essi siano sì come valli volte ad aquilone, o vero spelunche sotterranee, dove la luce del sole mai non discende, se non ripercussa da altra parte da quella illuminata. 9. Ultimamente conchiude, e dice che, per quello che dinanzi detto è (cioè che le vertudi sono frutto di nobilitade, e che Dio questa metta ne l'anima che ben siede), che ad alquanti, cioè a quelli che hanno intelletto, che sono pochi, è manifesto che nobilitade umana non sia altro che 'seme di felicitade', messo da Dio ne l'anima ben posta, cioè lo cui corpo è d'ogni parte disposto perfettamente. Chè se le vertudi sono frutto di nobilitade, e felicitade è dolcezza [per quelle] comparata, manifesto è essa nobilitade essere semente di felicitade, come detto è. 10. E se bene si guarda, questa diffinizione tutte e quattro le cagioni, cioè materiale, formale, efficiente e finale, comprende: materiale in quanto dice: ne l'anima ben posta, che è materia e subietto di nobilitade: formale in quanto dice che è seme; efficiente in quanto dice: Messo da Dio ne l'anima; finale in quanto dice: di felicità. E così è diffinita questa nostra bontade, la quale in noi similemente discende da somma e spirituale Virtude, come virtude in pietra da corpo nobilissimo celestiale.

CAPITOLO XXI

1. Acciò che più perfettamente s'abbia conoscenza de la umana bontade, secondo che in noi è principio di tutto bene, la quale nobilitade si chiama, da chiarire è in questo speziale capitolo come questa bontade discende in noi; e prima per modo naturale, e poi per modo teologico, cioè divino e spirituale. 2. In prima è da sapere che l'uomo è composto d'anima e di corpo; ma ne l'anima è quella; sì come detto è che è a guisa di semente de la virtù divina. Veramente per diversi filosofi de la differenza de le nostre anime fue diversamente ragionato: chè Avicenna e Algazel volsero che esse da loro e per loro principio fossero nobili e vili; e Plato e altri volsero che esse procedessero da le stelle, e fossero nobili e più e meno secondo la nobilitade de la stella. 3. Pittagora volse che tutte fossero d'una nobilitade, non solamente le umane, ma con le umane quelle de li animali bruti e de le piante, e le forme de le minere; e disse che tutta la differenza è de le corpora e de le forme. Se ciascuno fosse a difendere la sua oppinione, potrebbe essere che la veritade si vedrebbe essere in tutte; ma però che ne la prima faccia paiono un poco lontane dal vero, non secondo quelle procedere si conviene, ma secondo l'oppinione d'Aristotile e de li Peripatetici. 4. E però dico che quando l'umano seme cade nel suo recettaculo, cioè ne la matrice, esso porta seco la vertù de l'anima generativa e la vertù del cielo e la vertù de li elementi legati, cioè la complessione; e matura e dispone la materia a la vertù formativa, la quale diede l'anima del generante; e la vertù formativa prepara li organi a la vertù celestiale, che produce de la potenza del seme l'anima in vita. 5. La quale, incontanente produtta, riceve da la vertù del motore del cielo lo intelletto possibile; lo quale potenzialmente in sè adduce tutte le forme universali, secondo che sono nel suo produttore, e tanto meno quanto più dilungato da la prima Intelligenza è. 6. Non si maravigli alcuno, s'io parlo sì che par forte ad intendere; chè a me medesimo pare maraviglia, come cotale produzione si può pur conchiudere e con lo intelletto vedere. Non è cosa da manifestare a lingua, lingua, dico, veramente volgare. Per che io voglio dire come l'Apostolo: «O altezza de le divizie de la sapienza di Dio, come sono incomprensibili li tuoi giudicii e investigabili le tue vie!». 7. E però che la complessione del seme puote essere migliore e men buona, e la disposizione del seminante puote essere migliore e men buona, e la disposizione del Cielo a questo effetto puote essere buona, migliore e ottima (la quale si varia per le constellazioni, che continuamente si transmutano); incontra che de l'umano seme e di queste vertudi più pura [e men pura] anima si produce; e, secondo la sua puritade, discende in essa la vertude intellettuale possibile che detta è, e

come detto è. 8. E s’elli avviene che, per la puritade de l’anima ricevente, la intellettuale vertude sia bene astratta e assoluta da ogni ombra corporea, la divina bontade in lei multiplica, sì come in cosa sufficiente a ricevere quella, e quindi sì multiplica ne l’anima questa intelligenza, secondo che ricevere puote. E questo è quel seme di felicitade del quale al presente si parla. 9. E ciò è concordevole a la sentenza di Tullio in quello De Senectute, che, parlando in persona di Catone, dice: «Imperciò celestiale anima discese in noi, de l’altissimo abitaculo venuta in loco lo quale a la divina natura e a la etternitade è contrario». E in questa cotale anima è la vertude sua propria, e la intellettuale, e la divina, cioè quella influenza che detta è: però è scritto nel libro de le Cagioni: «Ogni anima nobile ha tre operazioni, cioè animale, intellettuale e divina». 10. E sono alcuni di tale oppinione che dicono, se tutte le precedenti vertudi s’accordassero sovra la produzione d’un’anima ne la loro ottima disposizione, che tanto discenderebbe in quella de la deitade, che quasi sarebbe un altro Iddio incarnato. E quasi questo è tutto ciò che per via naturale dicere si puote. 11. Per via teologica si può dire che, poi che la somma deitade, cioè Dio, vede apparecchiata la sua creatura a ricevere del suo beneficio, tanto largamente in quella ne mette quanto apparecchiata è a riceverne. E però che da ineffabile caritate vegnono questi doni, e la divina caritate sia appropriata a lo Spirito Santo, quindi è che chiamati sono doni di Spirito Santo. 12. Li quali, secondo che li distingue Isaia profeta, sono sette, cioè Sapienza, Intelletto, Consiglio, Fortezza, Scienza, Pietade e Timore di Dio. Oh buone biade, e buona e ammirabile sementa! e oh ammirabile e benigno seminatore, che non attende se non che la natura umana li apparecchi la terra a seminare! e beati quelli che tale sementa coltivano come si conviene! 13. Ove è da sapere che ‘l primo e lo più nobile rampollo che germogli di questo seme, per essere fruttifero, si è l’appetito de l’animo, lo quale in greco è chiamato ‘hormen’. E se questo non è bene culto e sostenuto diritto per buona consuetudine, poco vale la sementa, e meglio sarebbe non essere seminato. 14. E però vuole santo Augustino, e ancora Aristotile nel secondo de l’Etica, che l’uomo s’ausi a ben fare e a rifrenare le sue passioni, acciò che questo tallo, che detto è, per buona consuetudine induri, e rifermisi ne la sua rettitudine, sì che possa fruttificare, e del suo frutto uscire la dolcezza de l’umana felicitade.

CAPITOLO XXII

1. Comandamento è de li morali filosofi che de li benefici hanno parlato, che l'uomo dee mettere ingegno e sollicitudine in porgere li suoi benefici quanto puote [utili] più al ricevitore; onde io, volendo a cotale imperio essere obediente, intendo questo mio Convivio per ciascuna de le sue parti rendere utile quanto più mi sarà possibile. 2. E però che in questa parte occorre a me di potere alquanto ragionare [de l'umana felicitade, de la sua dolcezza ragionare] intendo; chè più utile ragionamento fare non si può a coloro che non la conoscono. Chè, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel primo de l'Etica e Tullio in quello del Fine de' Beni, male tragge al segno quelli che nol vede; e così male può ire a questa dolcezza chi prima non l'avvisa. 3. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che essa sia finale nostro riposo, per lo quale noi vivemo e operiamo ciò che facemo, utilissimo e necessario è questo segno vedere, per dirizzare a quello l'arco de la nostra operazione. E massimamente è da gradire quelli che a coloro che non veggiano l'addita. 4. Lasciando dunque stare l'oppinione che di quello ebbe Epicuro filosofo, e di quello ebbe Zenone, venire intendo sommariamente a la verace oppinione d'Aristotile e de li altri Peripatetici. Sì come detto è di sopra, de la divina bontade, in noi seminata e infusa dal principio de la nostra generazione, nasce uno rampollo, che li Greci chiamano 'hormen', cioè appetito d'animo naturale. 5. E sì come ne le biade che, quando nascono, dal principio hanno quasi una similitudine ne l'erba essendo, e poi si vengono per processo dissimigliando; così questo naturale appetito, che de la divina grazia surge, dal principio quasi si mostra non dissimile a quello che pur da natura nudamente viene, ma con esso, sì come l'erbate quasi di diversi biadi, si simiglia. E non pur ne li uomini, ma ne li uomini e ne le bestie ha similitudine; e ['n] questo appare, che ogni animale, sì come elli è nato, razionale come bruto, se medesimo ama, e teme e fugge quelle cose che a lui sono contrarie, e quelle odia. 6. Procedendo poi, sì come detto è, comincia una dissimilitudine tra loro, nel procedere di questo appetito, chè l'uno tiene uno cammino e l'altro un altro. Sì come dice l'Apostolo: «Molti corrono al palio, ma uno è quelli che 'l prende», così questi umani appetiti per diversi calli dal principio se ne vanno, e uno solo calle è quello che noi mena a la nostra pace. E però, lasciando stare tutti li altri, col trattato è da tenere dietro a quello che bene comincia. 7. Dico adunque che dal principio se stesso ama, avvegna che indistintamente; poi viene distinguendo quelle cose che a lui sono più amabili e meno, e più odibili [e meno], e seguita e fugge più e meno, secondo la conoscenza distingue non solamente ne l'altre cose, che secondamente ama, ma eziandio distingue in sè, che ama principalmente. 8. E conoscendo in sè diverse

parti, quelle che in lui sono più nobili, più ama quelle; e con ciò sia cosa che più [nobile] parte de l'uomo sia l'animo che 'l corpo, quello più ama. E così, amando sè principalmente, e per sè l'altre cose, e amando di sè la migliore parte più, manifesto è che più ama l'animo che 'l corpo o che altra cosa: lo quale animo naturalmente più che altra cosa dee amare. 9. Dunque, se la mente si dil[et]ta sempre ne l'uso de la cosa amata, che è frutto d'amore, [e] in quella cosa che massimamente è amata è l'uso massimamente dilettoso, l'uso del nostro animo è massimamente dilettoso a noi. E quello che massimamente è dilettoso a noi, quello è nostra felicitade e nostra beatitudine, oltre la quale nullo diletto è maggiore, nè nullo altro pare; sì come veder si puote, chi bene riguarda la precedente ragione. 10. E non dicesse alcuno che ogni appetito sia animo; chè qui s'intende animo solamente quello che spetta a la parte razionale, cioè la volontade e lo intelletto; sì che se volesse chiamare animo l'appetito sensitivo, qui non ha luogo, nè instanza puote avere, chè nullo dubita che l'appetito razionale non sia più nobile che 'l sensuale, e però più amabile: e così è questo di che ora si parla. Veramente l'uso del nostro animo è doppio, cioè pratico e speculativo (pratico è tanto quanto operativo), l'uno e l'altro dilett[os]issimo, avvegna che quello del contemplare sia più, sì come di sopra è narrato. 11. Quello del pratico si è operare per noi virtuosamente, cioè onestamente, con prudenza, con temperanza, con fortezza e con giustizia; quello de lo speculativo si è non operare per noi, ma considerare l'opere di Dio e de la natura. E questo [come] quell'altro è nostra beatitudine e somma felicitade, sì come vedere si può; la quale è la dolcezza del sopra notato seme, sì come omai manifestamente appare, a la quale molte volte cotale seme non perviene per male essere coltivato, e per essere disviata la sua pullulazione. 12. E similemente puote essere per molta corr[e]zione e cultura; chè là dove questo seme dal principio non cade, si puote inducere [n]el suo processo, sì che perviene a questo frutto; ed è uno modo quasi d'insetare l'altrui natura sopra diversa radice. E però nullo è che possa essere scusato; chè se da sua naturale radice uomo non ha questa sementa, ben la puote avere per via d'insetazione. Così fossero tanti quelli di fatto che s'insetassero, quanti sono quelli che da la buona radice si lasciano disviare! 13. Veramente di questi usi l'uno è più pieno di beatitudine che l'altro; sì come è lo speculativo, lo quale sanza mistura alcuna è uso de la nostra nobilissima parte, la quale, per lo radicale amore che detto è, massimamente è amabile, sì com'è lo 'ntelletto. E questa parte in questa vita perfettamente lo suo uso avere non puote - lo quale [è ved]ere [in s]è Iddio ch'è sommo intelligibile -, se non in quanto considera lui e mira lui per li suoi effetti. 14. E che noi domandiamo questa beatitudine per somma, e non altra, cioè quella de la vita attiva, n'ammaestra lo Vangelio di Marco, se bene quello volemo guardare. Dice

Marco che Maria Maddalena e Maria Iacobi e Maria Salomè andaro per trovare lo Salvatore al monimento, e quello non trovaro; ma trovaro uno giovane vestito di bianco che disse loro: «Voi domandate lo Salvatore, e io vi dico che non è qui; e però non abbiate temenza, ma ite, e dite a li discepoli suoi e a Piero che elli li precederà in Galilea; e quivi lo vedrete, sì come vi disse». 15. Per queste tre donne si possono intendere le tre sette de la vita attiva, cioè li Epicurei, li Stoici e li Peripatetici, che vanno al monimento, cioè al mondo presente che è recettaculo di corruttibili cose, e domandano lo Salvatore, cioè la beatitudine, e non la truovano; ma uno giovane truovano in bianchi vestimenti, lo quale, secondo la testimonianza di Matteo e anche de li altri, era angelo di Dio. E però Matteo disse: «L'angelo di Dio discese di cielo, e vegnendo volse la pietra e sedea sopra essa. E 'l suo aspetto era come folgore, e le sue vestimenta erano come neve». 16. Questo angelo è questa nostra nobilitade che da Dio viene, come detto è, che ne la nostra ragione parla, e dice a ciascuna di queste sette, cioè a qualunque va cercando beatitudine sue ne la vita attiva, che non è qui; ma vada, e dicalo a li discepoli e a Piero, cioè a coloro che 'l vanno cercando, e a coloro che sono sviati, sì come Piero che l'avea negato, che in Galilea li precederà: cioè che la beatitudine precederà noi in Galilea, cioè ne la speculazione. 17. Galilea è tanto a dire quanto bianchezza. Bianchezza è uno colore pieno di luce corporale più che nullo altro; e così la contemplazione è più piena di luce spirituale che altra cosa che qua giù sia. E dice: 'Elli precederà'; e non dice: 'Elli sarà con voi': a dare a intendere che ne la nostra contemplazione Dio sempre precede, nè mai lui giugnere potemo qui, lo quale è nostra beatitudine somma. E dice: 'Quivi lo vedrete, sì come disse': cioè quivi avrete de la sua dolcezza, cioè de la felicitade, sì come a voi è promesso qui; cioè, sì come stabilito è che voi avere possiate. 18. E così appare che nostra beatitudine (questa felicitade di cui si parla) prima trovare potemo quasi imperfetta ne la vita attiva, cioè ne le operazioni de le morali virtudi, e poi perfetta quasi ne le operazioni de le intellettuali. Le quali due operazioni sono vie espedite e dirittissime a menare a la somma beatitudine, la quale qui non si puote avere, come appare pur per quello che detto è.

CAPITOLO XXIII

1. Poi che dimostrata sufficientemente pare la diffinizione di nobilitade, e quella per le sue parti, come possibile è stato, è dichiarata, sì che vedere si puote omai che è lo nobile uomo, da procedere pare a la parte del testo che comincia: L'anima cui adorna esta bontate; ne la quale si mostrano li segni per li quali conoscere si puote il nobile uomo che detto è. 2. E dividesi questa parte in due: che ne la prima s'afferma che questa nobilitade luce e risplende per tutta la vita del nobile, manifestamente; ne la seconda si dimostra specificamente ne li suoi splendori, e comincia questa seconda parte: Ubidente, soave e vergognosa. 3. Intorno de la prima è da sapere che questo seme divino, di cui parlato è di sopra, ne la nostra anima incontanente germoglia, mettendo e diversificando per ciascuna potenza de l'anima, secondo la essigenza di quella. Germoglia dunque per la vegetativa, per la sensitiva e per la razionale; e dibrancasi per le vertuti di quelle tutte, dirizzando quelle tutte a le loro perfezioni, e in quelle sostenendosi sempre infino al punto che, con quella parte de la nostra anima che mai non muore, a l'altissimo e gloriosissimo seminadore al cielo ritorna. 4. E questo dice per quella prima che detta è. Poi quando comincia: Ubidente, soave e vergognosa, mostra quello per che potemo conoscere l'uomo nobile a li segni apparenti, che sono, di questa bontade divina, operazione; e partesi questa parte in quattro, secondo che per quattro etadi diversamente adopera, sì come per l'adolescenza, per la gioventute, per la senettute e per lo senio. E comincia la seconda parte: In giovinezza, temperata e forte; la terza comincia: E ne la sua senetta; la quarta comincia: Poi ne la quarta parte de la vita. In quest[o] è la sentenza di questa parte in generale. Intorno a la quale si vuole sapere che ciascuno effetto, in quanto effetto è, riceve la similitudine de la sua cagione, quanto è più possibile di ritenere. 6. Onde, con ciò sia cosa che la nostra vita, sì come detto è, ed ancora d'ogni vivente qua giù, sia causata dal cielo, e lo cielo a tutti questi cotali effetti, non per cerchio compiuto, ma per parte di quello a loro si scuopra; e così conviene che 'l suo movimento sia sopra essi come uno arco quasi, [e] tutte le [terrene] vite (e dico [terrene], sì de li [uomini] come de li altri viventi), [mon]tando e volgendo, convengono essere quasi ad imagine d'arco assimiglianti. Tornando dunque a la nostra, sola de la quale al presente s'intende, sì dico ch'ella procede a imagine di questo arco, montando e discendendo. 7. Ed è da sapere che questo arco [di giù, come l'arco] di su sarebbe eguale, se la materia de la nostra seminale complessione non impedisse la regola de la umana natura. Ma però che l'umido radicale [è] meno e più, e di migliore qualitade e [men buona], e più ha durare [in uno] che in uno altro effetto - lo qual è subietto

e nutrimento del calore, che è nostra vita -, avviene che l'arco de la vita d'un uomo è di minore e di maggiore tesa che quello de l'altro. 8. E alcuna morte è violenta, o vero per accidentale infertade affrettata; ma solamente quella che naturale è chiamata dal vulgo, e che è, è quel termine del quale si dice per lo Salmista: «Ponesti termine, lo quale passare non si può». E però che lo maestro de la nostra vita Aristotile s'accorse di questo arco di che ora si dice, parve volere che la nostra vita non fosse altro che uno salire e uno scendere: però dice in quello dove tratta di Giovinezza e di Vecchiezza, che giovinezza non è altro se non accrescimento di quella. 9. Là dove sia lo punto sommo di questo arco, per quella disaguaglianza che detta è di sopra, è forte da sapere; ma ne li più io credo tra il trentesimo e quarantesimo anno, e io credo che ne li perfettamente naturati esso ne sia nel trentacinquesimo anno. 10. E muovemi questa ragione: che ottimamente naturato fue lo nostro salvatore Cristo, lo quale volle morire nel trentaquattresimo anno de la sua etade; chè non era convenevole la divinitade stare [in] cos[a] in discresc[er]e, nè da credere è ch'elli non volesse dimorare in questa nostra vita al sommo, poi che stato c'era nel basso stato de la puerizia. 11. E ciò manifesta l'ora del giorno de la sua morte, chè volle quella consimigliare con la vita sua; onde dice Luca che era quasi ora sesta quando morio, che è a dire lo colmo del die. Onde si può comprendere per quello 'quasi' che al trentacinquesimo anno di Cristo era lo colmo de la sua etade. 12. Veramente questo arco non pur per mezzo si distingue da le scritture; ma, seguendo le quattro combina[zioni] de le contrarie qualitadi che sono ne la nostra composizione, a le quali pare essere appropriata, dico a ciascuna, una parte de la nostra etade, in quattro parti si divide, e chiamansi quattro etadi. 13. La prima è Adolescenza, che s'appropria al caldo e a l'umido; la seconda si è Gioventute, che s'appropria al caldo e al secco; la terza si è Senettute, che s'appropria al freddo e al secco; la quarta si è Senio, che s'appropria al freddo e a l'umido, secondo che nel quarto de la Metaura scrive Alberto. 14. E queste parti si fanno simigliantemente ne l'anno, in primavera, in estate, in autunno e in inverno; e nel die, ciò è infino a la terza, e poi infino a la nona (lasciando la sesta, nel mezzo di questa parte, per la ragione che si discerne), e poi infino al vespero e dal vespero innanzi. E però li gentili, cioè li pagani, diceano che 'l carro del sole avea quattro cavalli: lo primo chiamavano Eoo, lo secondo Pirroi, lo terzo Eton, lo quarto Flegon, secondo che scrive Ovidio nel secondo del Metamorfoseos. 15. Intorno a le parti del giorno è brievemente da sapere che, come detto è di sopra nel sesto del terzo trattato, la Chiesa usa, ne la distinzione de le ore, [le ore] del dì temporali, che sono in ciascuno die dodici, o grandi o piccole, secondo la quantitade del sole; e però che la sesta ora, cioè lo mezzo die, è la più nobile di tutto lo die e la più virtuosa, li suoi offici appressa quivi da ogni parte, cioè da

prima e di poi, quanto puote. 16. E però l’officio de la prima parte del die, cioè la terza, si dice in fine di quella; e quello de la terza parte e de la quarta si dice ne li principii. E però si dice mezza terza, prima che suoni per quella parte; e mezza nona, poi che per quella parte è sonato; e così mezzo vespero. E però sappia ciascuno che, ne la diritta nona, sempre dee sonare nel cominciamento de la settima ora del die: e questo basti a la presente digressione.

CAPITOLO XXIV

1. Ritornando al proposito, dico che la umana vita si parte per quattro etadi. La prima si chiama Adolescenzia, cioè ‘accrescimento di vita’; la seconda si chiama Gioventute, cioè ‘etade che puote giovare’, cioè perfezione dare, e così s’intende perfetta - chè nullo puote dare se non quello ch’elli ha -; la terza si chiama Senettute; la quarta si chiama Senio, sì come di sopra detto è. 2. De la prima nullo dubita, ma ciascuno savio s’accorda ch’ella dura in fino al venticinquesimo anno; e però che infino a quel tempo l’anima nostra intende a lo crescere e a lo abbellire del corpo, onde molte e grandi transmutazioni sono ne la persona, non puote perfettamente la razionale parte discernere. Per che la Ragione vuole che dinanzi a quella etade l’uomo non possa certe cose fare sanza curatore di perfetta etade. 3. De la seconda, la quale veramente è colmo de la nostra vita, diversamente è preso lo tempo da molti. Ma, lasciando ciò che ne scrivono li filosofi e li medici, e tornando a la ragione propria, dico che ne li più, ne li quali prendere si puote e dee ogni naturale giudicio, quella etade è venti anni. E la ragione che ciò mi dà si è che, se ‘l colmo del nostro arco è ne li trentacinque, tanto quanto questa etade ha di salita tanto dee avere di scesa; e quella salita e quella scesa è quasi lo tenere de l’arco, nel quale poco di flessione si discerne. 4. Avemo dunque che la gioventute nel quarantacinquesimo anno si compie. E sì come l’adolescenzia è in venticinque anni che precede, montando, a la gioventute, così lo discendere, cioè la senettute, è [in] altrettanto tempo che succede a la gioventute; e così si termina la senettute nel settantesimo anno. 5. Ma però che l’adolescenza non comincia dal principio de la vita, pigliandola per lo modo che detto è, ma presso a otto anni dopo quell[o]; e però che la nostra natura si studia di salire, e a lo scendere raffrena, però che lo caldo naturale è menomato, e puote poco, e l’umido è ingrossato (non per[ò] in quantitade, ma p[ur] in qualitade, sì ch’è meno vaporabile e consumabile), avviene che oltre la senettute rimane de la nostra vita forse in quantitade di diece anni, o poco più o poco meno: e questo tempo si chiama senio. 6. Onde avemo di Platone, del quale ottimamente si può dire che fosse naturato e per la sua perfezione e per la fisonomia che di lui prese Socrate quando prima lo vide, che esso vivette ottantuno anno, secondo che testimonia Tullio in quello De Senectute. E io credo che se Cristo fosse stato non crucifisso, e fosse vivuto lo spazio che la sua vita poteva secondo natura trapassare, elli sarebbe a li ottantuno anno di mortale corpo in etternale transmutato. 7. Veramente, sì come di sopra detto è, queste etadi possono essere più lunghe e più corte secondo la complessione nostra e la composizione; ma, come elle siano in questa proporzione, come detto è, in tutti

mi pare da servare, cioè di fare l'etadi in quelli cotali e più lunghe e meno secondo la integritade di tutto lo tempo de la naturale vita. Per queste tutte etadi questa nobilitade, di cui si parla, diversamente mostra li suoi effetti ne l'anima nobilitata; e questo è quello che questa parte, sopra la quale al presente si scrive, intende a dimostrare. 8. Dov'è da sapere che la nostra buona e diritta natura ragionevolmente procede in noi, sì come vedemo procedere la natura de le piante in quelle; e però altri costumi e altri portamenti sono ragionevoli ad una etade più che ad altra, ne li quali l'anima nobilitata ordinatamente procede per una semplice via, usando li suoi atti ne li loro tempi ed etadi sì come a l'ultimo suo frutto sono ordinati. E Tullio in ciò s'accorda in quello De Senectute. 9. E lasciando lo figurato che di questo diverso processo de l'etadi tiene Virgilio ne lo Eneida, e lasciando stare quello che Egidio eremita ne dice ne la prima parte de lo Reggimento de' Principi, e lasciando stare quello che ne tocca Tullio in quello de li Offici, e seguendo solo quello che la ragione per sè ne puote vedere, dico che questa prima etade è porta e via per la quale s'entra ne la nostra buona vita. 10. E questa entrata conviene avere di necessitade certe cose, le quali la buona natura, che non viene meno ne le cose necessarie, ne dà; sì come vedemo che dà a la vite le foglie per difensione del frutto, e li vignuoli con li quali difende e lega la sua imbecillitade, sì che sostiene lo peso del suo frutto. 11. Dà adunque la buona natura a questa etade quattro cose, necessarie a lo entrare ne la cittade del bene vivere. La prima si è obedienza; la seconda soavitade; la terza vergogna; la quarta adornezza corporale, sì come dice lo testo ne la prima particola. 12. È dunque da sapere, che sì come quello che mai non fosse stato in una cittade, non saprebbe tenere le vie sanza insegnamento di colui che l'hae usata; così l'adolescente, che entra ne la selva erronea di questa vita, non saprebbe tenere lo buono cammino, se da li suoi maggiori non li fosse mostrato. Nè lo mostrare varrebbe, se a li loro comandamenti non fosse obediente; e però fu a questa etade necessaria la obedienza. 13. Ben potrebbe alcuno dire così: dunque potrà essere detto quelli obediente che crederà li malvagi comandamenti, come quelli che crederà li buoni? Rispondo che non fia quella obedienza, ma transgressione: chè se lo re comanda una via e lo servo ne comanda un'altra, non è da obedire lo servo; chè sarebbe disobedire lo re e così sarebbe transgressione. 14. E però dice Salomone, quando intende correggere suo figlio (e questo è lo primo suo comandamento): «Audi, figlio mio, l'ammaestramento del tuo padre». E poi lo rimuove incontanente da l'altrui reo consiglio e ammaestramento, dicendo: 'Non ti possano quello fare di lusinghe nè di diletto li peccatori, che tu vadi con loro'. Onde, sì come, nato, tosto lo figlio a la tetta de la madre s'apprende, così tosto, come alcuno lume d'animo in esso appare, si dee volgere a la correzione del padre, e lo padre lui ammaestrare. 15. E guardisi che non li

dea di sè essemplo ne l’opera, che sia contrario a le parole de la correzione: chè naturalmente vedemo ciascuno figlio più mirare a le vestigie de li paterni piedi che a l’altre. E però dice e comanda la Legge, che a ciò provede, che la persona del padre sempre santa e onesta dee apparere a li suoi figli; e così appare che la obedienza fue necessaria in questa etade. 16. E però scrive Salomone ne li Proverbi, che quelli che umilemente e obedientemente sostiene dal correttore le sue corrett[iv]e riprensioni, «sarà glorioso»; e dice ‘sarà’, a dare ad intendere che elli parla a lo adolescente, che non puote essere, ne la presente etade. E se alcuno calunniasse: ‘Ciò che detto è, è pur del padre e non d’altri’, dico che al padre si dee riducere ogni altra obedienza. 17. Onde dice l’Apostolo a li Colossensi: «Figliuoli, obedite a li vostri padri per tutte cose, per ciò che questo vuole Iddio». E se non è in vita lo padre, riducere si dee a quelli che per lo padre è ne l’ultima volontade in padre lasciato; e se lo padre muore intestato, riducere si dee a colui cui la Ragione commette lo suo governo. 18. E poi deono essere obediti maestri e maggiori, c[ui] in alcuno modo pare dal padre, o da quelli che loco paterno tiene, essere commesso. Ma però che lungo è stato lo capitolo presente per le utili digressioni che contiene, per l’altro capitolo l’altre cose sono da ragionare.

CAPITOLO XXV

1. Non solamente questa anima e natura buona in adolescenza è obediente, ma eziandio soave; la quale cosa è l'altra ch'è necessaria in questa etade a bene intrare ne la porta de la gioventute. Necessaria è, poi che noi non potemo perfetta vita avere sanza amici, sì come ne l'ottavo de l'Etica vuole Aristotile; e la maggiore parte de l'amistadi si paiono seminare in questa etade prima, però che in essa comincia l'uomo ad essere grazioso, o vero lo contrario: la quale grazia s'acquista per soavi reggimenti, che sono dolce e cortesemente parlare, dolce e cortesemente servire e operare. 2. E però dice Salomone a lo adolescente figlio: «Li schernidori Dio li schernisce, e a li mansueti Dio darà grazia». E altrove dice: «Rimuovi da te la mala bocca, e li altri atti villani siano di lungi da te». Per che appare, che necessaria sia questa soavitade, come detto è. 3. Anche è necessaria a questa etade la passione de la vergogna; e però la buona e nobile natura in questa etade la mostra, sì come lo testo dice. E però che la vergogna è apertissimo segno in adolescenza di nobilitade, perchè quivi è massimamente necessaria al buono fondamento de la nostra vita, a lo quale la nobile natura intende, di quella è alquanto con diligenza da parlare. 4. Dico che per vergogna io intendo tre passioni necessarie al fondamento de la nostra vita buona: l'una si è stupore; l'altra si è pudore; la terza si è verecundia; avvegna che la volgare gente questa distinzione non discerna. E tutte e tre queste sono necessarie a questa etade per questa ragione: a questa etade è necessario d'essere reverente e disidiroso di sapere; a questa etade è necessario d'essere rifrenato, sì che non transvada; a questa etade è necessario d'essere penitente del fallo, sì che non s'ausi a fallare. E tutte queste cose fanno le passioni sopra dette, che vergogna volgarmente sono chiamate. 5. Chè lo stupore è uno stordimento d'animo per grandi e maravigliose cose vedere o udire o per alcuno modo sentire: che, in quanto paiono grandi, fanno reverente a sè quelli che le sente; in quanto paiono mirabili, fanno voglioso di sapere di quelle. E però li antichi regi ne le loro magioni faceano magnifici lavorii d'oro e di pietre e d'artificio, acciò che quelli che le vedessero divenissero stupidi, e però reverenti, e domandatori de le condizioni onorevoli de lo rege. 6. E però dice Stazio, lo dolce poeta, nel primo de la Tebana Istoria, che quando Adrasto, rege de li Argi, vide Polinice coverto d'un cuoio di leone, e vide Tideo coverto d'un cuoio di porco selvatico, e ricordossi del risponso che Apollo dato avea per le sue figlie, che esso divenne stupido; e però più reverente e più disideroso di sapere. 7. Lo pudore è uno ritraimento d'animo da laide cose, con paura di cadere in quelle; sì come vedemo ne le vergini e ne le donne buone e ne li adolescenti, che tanto sono pudici, che

non solamente là dove richesti o tentati sono di fallare, ma dove pure alcuna imaginazione di venereo compimento avere si puote, tutti si dipingono ne la faccia di palido o di rosso colore. 8. Onde dice lo sopra notato poeta ne lo allegato libro primo di Tebe, che quando Aceste, nutrice d'Argia e di Deifile, figlie d'Adrasto rege, le menò dinanzi da li occhi del santo padre ne la presenza de li due peregrini, cioè Polinice e Tideo, le vergini palide e rubicunde si fecero, e li loro occhi fuggiro da ogni altrui sguardo, e solo ne la paterna faccia, quasi come sicuri, si tennero. 9. Oh quanti falli rifrena esto pudore! quante disoneste cose e dimande fa tacere! quante disoneste cupiditati raffrena! quante male tentazioni non pur ne la pudica persona diffida, ma eziandio in quello che la guarda! quante laide parole ritene! Chè, sì come dice Tullio nel primo de li Offici: Nullo atto è laido, che non sia laido quello nominare; e però lo pudico e nobile uomo mai non parla sì, che ad una donna non fossero oneste le sue parole. Ahi quanto sta male a ciascuno nobile uomo che onore vada cercando, menzionare cose che ne la bocca d'ogni donna stean male! 10. La verecundia è una paura di disonoranza per fallo commesso; e di questa paura nasce un pentimento del fallo, lo quale ha in sè una amaritudine che è gastigamento a più non fallire. Onde dice questo medesimo poeta, in quella medesima parte, che quando Polinice fu domandato da Adrasto rege del suo essere, ch'elli dubitò prima di dicere, per vergogna del fallo che contra lo padre fatto avea, e ancora per li falli d'Edippo suo padre, chè paiono rimanere in vergogna del figlio; e non nominò suo padre, ma li antichi suoi e la terra e la madre. Per che bene appare, vergogna essere necessaria in quella etade. 11. E non pure obedienza, soavitade e vergogna la nobile natura in questa etade dimostra, ma dimostra bellezza e snellezza nel corpo; sì come dice lo testo quando dice: E sua persona adorna. E questo 'adorna' è verbo e non nome: verbo, dico, indicativo del tempo presente in terza persona. Ove è da sapere che anco è necessaria questa opera a la nostra buona vita; chè la nostra anima conviene grande parte de le sue operazioni operare con organo corporale, e allora opera bene che 'l corpo è bene per le sue parti ordinato e disposto. 12. E quando elli è bene ordinato e disposto, allora è bello per tutto e per le parti; chè l'ordine debito de le nostre membra rende uno piacere non so di che armonia mirabile, e la buona disposizione, cioè la sanitade, getta sopra quelle uno colore dolce a riguardare. 13. E così dicere che la nobile natura lo suo corpo abbellisca e faccia conto e accorto, non è altro a dire se non che l'acconcia a perfezione d'ordine, e, co[sì questa come l']altre cose che ragionate sono, appare essere necessarie a l'adolescenza: le quali la nobile anima, cioè la nobile natura, [dà, e] ad esse primamente intende, sì come cosa che, come detto è, da la divina provedenza è seminata.

CAPITOLO XXVI

1. Poi che sopra la prima particola di questa parte, che mostra quello per che potemo conoscere l'uomo nobile a li segni apparenti, è ragionato, da procedere è a la seconda parte, la quale comincia: In giovinezza, temperata e forte. 2. Dice adunque che sì come la nobile natura in adolescenza ubidente, soave e vergognosa, e adornatrice de la sua persona si mostra, così ne la gioventute si fa temperata, forte, amorosa, cortese e leale: le quali cinque cose paiono, e sono, necessarie a la nostra perfezione, in quanto avemo rispetto a noi medesimi. 3. E intorno di ciò si vuole sapere che tutto quanto la nobile natura prepara ne la prima etade, è apparecchiato e ordinato per provedimento di Natura universale, che ordina la particulare a sua perfezione. Questa perfezione nostra si può doppiamente considerare. Puotesi considerare secondo che ha rispetto a noi medesimi: e questa ne la nostra gioventute si dee avere, che è colmo de la nostra vita. 4. Puotesi considerare secondo che ha rispetto ad altri; e però che prima conviene essere perfetto, e poi la sua perfezione comunicare ad altri, convienesi questa secondaria perfezione avere appresso questa etade, cioè ne la senettute, sì come di sotto si dicerà. 5. Qui adunque è da reducere a mente quello che di sopra, nel ventiduesimo capitolo di questo trattato, si ragiona de lo appetito che in noi dal nostro principio nasce. Questo appetito mai altro non fa che cacciare e fuggire; e qualunque ora esso caccia quello che e quanto si conviene, e fugge quello che e quanto si conviene, l'uomo è ne li termini de la sua perfezione. 6. Veramente questo appetito conviene essere cavalcato da la ragione; chè sì come uno sciolto cavallo, quanto ch'ello sia di natura nobile, per sè, sanza lo buono cavalcatore, bene non si conduce, così questo appetito, che irascibile e concupiscibile si chiama, quanto ch'ello sia nobile, a la ragione obedire conviene, la quale guida quello con freno e con isproni, come buono cavaliere. 7. Lo freno usa quando elli caccia, e chiamasi quello freno temperanza, la quale mostra lo termine infino al quale è da cacciare; lo sprone usa quando fugge, per lui tornare a lo loco onde fuggire vuole, e questo sprone si chiama fortezza, o vero magnanimitate, la quale vertute mostra lo loco dove è da fermarsi e da pugnare. 8. E così infrenato mostra Virgilio, lo maggiore nostro poeta, che fosse Enea, ne la parte de lo Eneida ove questa etade si figura; la quale parte comprende lo quarto, lo quinto e lo sesto libro de lo Eneida. E quanto raffrenare fu quello, quando, avendo ricevuto da Dido tanto di piacere quanto di sotto nel settimo trattato si dicerà, e usando con essa tanto di dilettazione, elli si partio, per seguire onesta e laudabile via e fruttuosa, come nel quarto de l'Eneida scritto è! 9. Quanto spronare fu quello, quando esso Enea sostenette solo con Sibilla a

intrare ne lo Inferno a cercare de l'anima di suo padre Anchise, contra tanti pericoli, come nel sesto de la detta istoria si dimostra! Per che appare che, ne la nostra gioventute, essere a nostra perfezione ne convegna 'temperati e forti'. E questo fa e dimostra la buona natura, sì come lo testo dice espressamente. 10. Ancora è a questa etade, a sua perfezione, necessario d'essere amorosa; però che ad essa si conviene guardare diretro e dinanzi, sì come cosa che è nel meridionale cerchio: conviensi amare li suoi maggiori, da li quali ha ricevuto ed essere e nutrimento e dottrina, sì che esso non paia ingrato; conviensi amare li suoi minori, acciò che, amando quelli, dea loro de li suoi benefici, per li quali poi ne la minore prosperitade esso sia da loro sostenuto e onorato. 11. E questo amore mostra che avesse Enea lo nomato poeta nel quinto libro sopra detto, quando lasciò li vecchi Troiani in Cicilia raccomandati ad Aceste, e partilli da le fatiche; e quando ammaestrò in questo luogo Ascanio, suo figliuolo, con li altri adolescentuli armeggiando. Per che appare a questa etade necessario essere amare, come lo testo dice. 12. Ancora è necessario a questa etade essere cortese; chè, avvegna che a ciascuna etade sia bello l'essere di cortesi costumi, a questa è massimamente necessario; però che [lievemente merita perdono l'adolescenza, se di cortesia manchi, per minoranza d'etade, e però che,] nel contrario, non la puote avere la senettute, per la gravezza sua e per la severitade che a lei si richiede; e così lo senio maggiormente. 13. E questa cortesia mostra che avesse Enea questo altissimo poeta, nel sesto sopra detto, quando dice che Enea rege, per onorare lo corpo di Miseno morto, che era stato trombatore d'Ettore e poi s'era raccomandato a lui, s'accinse e prese la scure ad aiutare tagliare le legne per lo fuoco che dovea ardere lo corpo morto, come era di loro costume. Per che bene appare questa essere necessaria a la gioventute, e però la nobile anima in quella la dimostra, come detto è. 14. Ancora è necessario a questa etade essere leale. Lealtade è seguire e mettere in opera quello che le leggi dicono, e ciò massimamente si conviene a lo giovane: però che lo adolescente, come detto è, per minoranza d'etade lievemente merita perdono; lo vecchio per più esperienza dee essere giusto, e non essaminatore di legge, se non in quanto lo suo diritto giudicio e la legge è tutto uno quasi e, quasi sanza legge alcuna, dee giustamente sè guidare: che non può fare lo giovane. E basti che esso seguiti la legge, e in quella seguitare si diletti: sì come dice lo predetto poeta, nel predetto quinto libro, che fece Enea, quando fece li giuochi in Cicilia ne l'anniversario del padre; che ciò che promise per le vittorie, lealmente diede poi a ciascuno vittorioso, sì come era di loro lunga usanza, che era loro legge. 15. Per che è manifesto che a questa etade lealtade, cortesia, amore, fortezza e temperanza siano necessarie, sì come dice lo testo che al presente è ragionato; e però la nobile anima tutte le dimostra.

CAPITOLO XXVII

1. Veduto e ragionato è assai sofficientemente sopra quella particola che ‘l testo pone, mostrando quelle probitadi che a la gioventute presta la nobile anima; per che da intendere pare a la terza parte che comincia: è ne la sua senetta, ne la quale intende lo testo mostrare quelle cose che la nobile natura mostra e dee avere ne la terza etade, cioè senettude. 2. E dice che l’anima nobile ne la senetta sì è prudente, sì è giusta, sì è larga, e allegra di dir bene in prode d’altrui e d’udire quello, cioè che è affabile. E veramente queste quattro vertudi a questa etade sono convenientissime. E a ciò vedere, è da sapere che, sì come dice Tullio in quello De Senectute, «certo corso ha la nostra buona etade, e una via semplice è quella de la nostra buona natura; e a ciascuna parte de la nostra etade è data stagione a certe cose». 3. Onde sì come a l’adolescenza dato è, com’è detto di sopra, quello per che a perfezione e a maturitade venire possa, così a la gioventute è data la perfezione, e [a la senettute] la maturitade acciò che la dolcezza del suo frutto e a sè e ad altrui sia profittabile; chè sì come Aristotile dice, l’uomo è animale civile, per che a lui si richiede non pur a sè ma altrui essere utile. Onde si legge di Catone che non a sè, ma a la patria e a tutto lo mondo nato esser credea. 4. Dunque appresso la propria perfezione, la quale s’acquista ne la gioventute, conviene venire quella che alluma non pur sè ma li altri; e conviensi aprire l’uomo quasi com’una rosa che più chiusa stare non puote, e l’odore che dentro generato è spandere: e questo conviene essere in questa terza etade, che per mano corre. 5. Conviensi adunque essere prudente, cioè savio: e a ciò essere si richiede buona memoria de le vedute cose, buona conoscenza de le presenti e buona provedenza de le future. E, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel sesto de l’Etica, «impossibile è essere savio a chi non è buono», e però non è da dire savio chi con sottratti e con inganni procede, ma è da chiamare astuto; chè sì come nullo dicerebbe savio quelli che si sapesse bene trarre de la punta d’uno coltello ne la pupilla de l’occhio, così non è da dire savio quelli che ben sa una malvagia cosa fare, la quale facendo, prima sè sempre che altrui offende. 6. Se bene si mira, da la prudenza vegnono li buoni consigli, li quali conducono sè e altri a buono fine ne le umane cose e operazioni; e questo è quello dono che Salomone, veggendosi al governo del populo essere posto, chiese a Dio, sì come nel terzo libro de li Regi è scritto. 7. Nè questo cotale prudente non attende [chi] li domandi ‘Consigliami’, ma proveggendo per lui, sanza richesta colui consiglia; sì come la rosa, che non pur a quelli che va a lei per lo suo odore rende quello, ma eziandio a qualunque appresso lei va. 8. Potrebbe qui dire alcuno medico o legista: ‘Dunque porterò io lo mio consiglio e

darollo eziandio che non mi sia chesto, e de la mia arte non averò frutto?’ Rispondo, sì come dice nostro Signore: «A grado riceveste, a grado e date». 9. Dico dunque, messer lo legista, che quelli consigli che non hanno rispetto a la tua arte e che procedono solo da quel buono senno che Dio ti diede (che è prudenza, de la quale si parla), tu non li dei vendere a li figli di Colui che te l’ha dato: quelli che hanno rispetto a l’arte, la quale hai comperata, vendere puoi; ma non sì che non si convegnano alcuna volta decimare e dare a Dio, cioè a quelli miseri a cui solo lo grado divino è rimaso. 10. Conviensi anche a questa etade essere giusto, acciò che li suoi giudicii e la sua autoritade sia un lume e una legge a li altri. E perchè questa singulare vertù, cioè giustizia, fue veduta per li antichi filosofi apparire perfetta in questa etade, lo reggimento de le cittadi commisero in quelli che in questa etade erano; e però lo collegio de li rettori fu detto Senato. 11. Oh misera, misera patria mia! quanta pietà mi stringe per te, qual volta leggo, qual volta scrivo cosa che a reggimento civile abbia rispetto! Ma però che di giustizia nel penultimo trattato di questo volume si tratterà, basti qui al presente questo poco avere toccato di quella. 12. Conviensi anche a questa etade essere largo; però che allora si conviene la cosa quando più satisface al debito de la sua natura, nè mai a lo debito de la larghezza non si può satisfacere così come in questa etade. Chè se volemo bene mirare al processo d’Aristotile nel quarto de l’Etica, e a quello di Tullio in quello de li Offici, la larghezza vuole essere a luogo e a tempo, tale che lo largo non noccia a sè nè ad altrui. 13. La quale cosa avere non si puote sanza prudenza e sanza giustizia; le quali virtudi anzi a questa etade avere perfette per via naturale è impossibile. Ahi malestrui e malnati, che disertate vedove e pupilli, che rapite a li men possenti, che furate e occupate l’altrui ragioni; e di quelle corredate conviti, donate cavalli e arme, robe e denari, portate le mirabili vestimenta, edificate li mirabili edifici, e credetevi larghezza fare! 14. E che è questo altro a fare che levare lo drappo di su l’altare e coprire lo ladro la sua mensa? Non altrimenti si dee ridere, tiranni, de le vostre messioni, che del ladro che menasse a la sua casa li convitati, e la tovaglia furata di su l’altare, con li segni ecclesiastici ancora, ponesse in su la mensa e non credesse che altri se n’accorgesse. 15. Udite, ostinati, che dice Tullio contro a voi nel libro de li Offici: «Sono molti, certo desiderosi d’essere apparenti e gloriosi, che tolgono a li altri per dare a li altri, credendosi buoni essere tenuti, [se li] arricchiscono per qual ragione essere voglia. Ma ciò tanto è contrario a quello che far si conviene, che nulla è più». 16. Conviensi anche a questa etade essere affabile, ragionare lo bene, e quello udire volontieri: imperò che allora è buono ragionare lo bene, quando esso è ascoltato. E questa etade pur ha seco un’ombra d’autoritade, per la quale più pare che lei l’uomo ascolti che nulla più tostana etade, e più belle e buone novelle pare dover savere per la lunga

esperienza de la vita. Onde dice Tullio in quello De Senectute, in persona di Catone vecchio: «A me è ricresciuto e volontà e diletto di stare in colloquio più ch'io non solea». 17. E che tutte e quattro queste cose convegnono a questa etade, n'ammaestra Ovidio nel settimo Metamorfoseos, in quella favola dove scrive come Cefalo d'Atene venne ad Eaco re per soccorso, ne la guerra che Atene ebbe con Creti. Mostra che Eaco vecchio fosse prudente, quando, avendo per pestilenza di corrompimento d'aere quasi tutto lo popolo perduto, esso saviamente ricorse a Dio e a lui domandò lo ristoro de la morta gente; e per lo suo senno, che a pazienza lo tenne e a Dio tornare lo fece, lo suo popolo ristorato li fu maggiore che prima. 18. Mostra che esso fosse giusto, quando dice che esso fu partitore a nuovo popolo e distributore de la terra diserta sua. Mostra che fosse largo, quando disse a Cefalo dopo la dimanda de lo aiuto: «O Atene, non domandate a me aiutorio, ma toglietevelo; e non dite a voi dubitose le forze che ha questa isola. E tutto questo è [lo] stato de le mie cose: forze non ci menomano, anzi ne sono a noi di soperchio; e lo avversario è grande, e lo tempo da dare è, bene avventuroso e sanza escusa». 19. Ahi quante cose sono da notare in questa risposta! Ma a buono intenditore basti essere posto qui come Ovidio lo pone. Mostra che fosse affabile, quando dice e ritrae per lungo sermone a Cefalo la istoria de la pestilenza del suo popolo diligentemente, e lo ristoramento di quello. 20. Per che assai è manifesto a questa etade essere quattro cose convenienti; per che la nobile natura in essa le mostra, sì come lo testo dice. E perchè più memorabile sia l'essemplo che detto è, dice di Eaco re che questi fu padre di Telamon, [di Peleus] e di Foco, del quale Telamon nacque Aiace, e di Peleus Achilles.

CAPITOLO XXVIII

1. Appresso de la ragionata particola è da procedere a l'ultima, cioè a quella che comincia: Poi ne la quarta parte de la vita; per la quale lo testo intende mostrare quello che fa la nobile anima ne l'ultima etade, cioè nel senio. 2. E dice ch'ella fa due cose: l'una, che ella ritorna a Dio, sì come a quello porto onde ella si partio quando venne ad intrare nel mare di questa vita; l'altra si è che ella benedice lo cammino che ha fatto, però che è stato diritto e buono e sanza amaritudine di tempesta. 3. E qui è da sapere che, sì come dice Tullio in quello De Senectute, la naturale morte è quasi a noi porto di lunga navigazione e riposo. Ed è così: [chè], come lo buono marinaio, come esso appropinqua al porto, cala le sue vele, e soavemente, con debile conducimento, entra in quello; così noi dovemo calare le vele de le nostre mondane operazioni e tornare a Dio con tutto nostro intendimento e cuore, sì che a quello porto si vegna con tutta soavitade e con tutta pace. 4. E in ciò avemo da la nostra propria natura grande ammaestramento di soavitade, chè in essa cotale morte non è dolore nè alcuna acerbitate, ma sì come uno pomo maturo leggiermente e sanza violenza si dispicca dal suo ramo, così la nostra anima sanza doglia si parte dal corpo ov'ella è stata. Onde Aristotile in quello De Iuventute et Senectute dice che «sanza tristizia è la morte ch'è ne la vecchiezza». 5. E sì come a colui che viene di lungo cammino, anzi ch'entri ne la porta de la sua cittade, li si fanno incontro li cittadini di quella, così a la nobile anima si fanno incontro, e deono fare, quelli cittadini de la etterna vita; e così fanno per le sue buone operazioni e contemplazioni: chè, già essendo a Dio renduta e astrattasi da le mondane cose e cogitazioni, vedere le pare coloro che appresso di Dio crede che siano. 6. Odi che dice Tullio, in persona di Catone vecchio: «A me pare già vedere e levomi in grandissimo studio di vedere li vostri padri, che io amai, e non pur quelli [che io stesso conobbi], ma eziandio quelli di cui udi' parlare». 7. Rendesi dunque a Dio la nobile anima in questa etade, e attende lo fine di questa vita con molto desiderio e uscir le pare de l'albergo e ritornare ne la propria mansione, uscir le pare di cammino e tornare in cittade, uscir le pare di mare e tornare a porto. O miseri e vili che con le vele alte correte a questo porto, e là ove dovereste riposare, per lo impeto del vento rompete, e perdete voi medesimi là dove tanto camminato avete! 8. Certo lo cavaliere Lancelotto non volse entrare con le vele alte, nè lo nobilissimo nostro latino Guido montefeltrano. Bene questi nobili calaro le vele de le mondane operazioni, che ne la loro lunga etade a religione si rendero, ogni mondano diletto e opera disponendo. 9. E non si puote alcuno escusare per legame di matrimonio, che in lunga etade lo tegna; chè non torna a

religione pur quelli che a santo Benedetto, a santo Augustino, a santo Francesco e a santo Domenico si fa d'abito e di vita simile, ma eziandio a buona e vera religione si può tornare in matrimonio stando, chè Dio non volse religioso di noi se non lo cuore. 10. E però dice santo Paulo a li Romani: «Non quelli ch'è manifestamente, è Giudeo, nè quella ch'è manifesta in carne è circuncisione; ma quelli ch'è in ascoso, è Giudeo, e la circuncisione del cuore, in ispirito non in littera, è circuncisione; la loda de la quale è non da li uomini, ma da Dio». 11. E benedice anco la nobile anima in questa etade li tempi passati; e bene li può benedicere, però che, per quelli rivolvendo la sua memoria, essa si rimembra de le sue diritte operazioni, sanza le quali al porto, ove s'appressa, venire non si potea con tanta ricchezza nè con tanto guadagno. 12. E fa come lo buono mercatante, che, quando viene presso al suo porto, essamina lo suo procaccio e dice, 'Se io non fosse per cotal cammino passato, questo tesoro non avre' io, e non avrei di ch'io godesse ne la mia cittade, a la quale io m'appresso'; e però benedice la via che ha fatta. 13. E che queste due cose convegnano a questa etade, ne figura quello grande poeta Lucano nel secondo de la sua Farsalia, quando dice che Marzia tornò a Catone e richiese lui e pregollo che la dovesse riprendere [g]ua[s]ta: per la quale Marzia s'intende la nobile anima. 14. E potemo così ritrarre la figura a veritade. Marzia fu vergine, e in quello stato si significa l'adolescenza; [poi si maritò] a Catone, e in quello stato si significa la gioventute; fece allora figli, per li quali si significano le vertudi che di sopra si dicono a li giovani convenire; e partissi da Catone, e maritossi ad Ortensio, per che [si] significa che si partì la gioventute e venne la senettute; fece figli di questo anche, per che si significano le vertudi che di sopra si dicono convenire a la senettute. 15. Morì Ortensio; per che si significa lo termine de la senettute; e vedova fatta - per lo quale vedovaggio si significa lo senio - tornò Marzia dal principio del suo vedovaggio a Catone, per che si significa la nobile anima dal principio del senio tornare a Dio. E quale uomo terreno più degno fu di significare Iddio, che Catone? Certo nullo. 16. E che dice Marzia a Catone? «Mentre che in me fu lo sangue», cioè la gioventute, «mentre che in me fu la maternale vertute», cioè la senettute, che bene è madre de l'alte [vertu]di, sì come di sopra è mostrato, «io» dice Marzia «feci e compiei li tuoi comandamenti», cioè a dire che l'anima stette ferma a le civili operazioni. Dice: «E tolsi due mariti», cioè a due etadi fruttifera sono stata. 17. «Ora» dice Marzia «che 'l mio ventre è lasso, e che io sono per li parti vota, a te mi ritorno, non essendo più da dare ad altro sposo»; cioè a dire che la nobile anima, cognoscendosi non avere più ventre da frutto, cioè li suoi membri sentendosi a debile stato venuti, torna a Dio, colui che non ha mestiere de le membra corporali. E dice Marzia: «Dammi li patti de li antichi letti, dammi lo nome solo

del maritaggio»; che è a dire che la nobile anima dire a Dio: ‘Dammi, Signor mio, omai lo riposo di te; dammi, almeno, che io in questa tanta vita sia chiamata tua’. 18. E dice Marzia: «Due ragioni mi muovono a dire questo: l’una si è che dopo di me si dica ch’io sia morta moglie di Catone; l’altra, che dopo me si dica che tu non mi scacciasti, ma di buono animo mi maritasti». 19. Per queste due cagioni si muove la nobile anima; e vuole partire d’esta vita sposa di Dio, e vuole mostrare che graziosa fosse a Dio la sua [oper]azione. Oh sventurati e male nati, che innanzi volete partirvi d’esta vita sotto lo titolo d’Ortensio che di Catone! Nel nome di cui è bello terminare ciò che de li segni de la nobilitade ragionare si convenia, però che in lui essa nobilitade tutti li dimostra per tutte etadi.

CAPITOLO XXIX

1. Poi che mostrato [ha] lo testo quelli segni li quali per ciascuna etade appaiono nel nobile uomo e per li quali conoscere si puote, e sanza li quali essere non puote, come lo sole sanza luce e lo fuoco sanza caldo, grida lo testo a la gente, a l'ultimo di ciò che di nobilità è ritratto, e dice: 'O voi che udito m'avete, vedete quanti sono coloro che sono ingannati!': cioè coloro che, per essere di famose e antiche generazioni e per essere discesi di padri eccellenti, credono essere nobili, nobilitade non avendo in loro. 2. E qui surgono due quistioni, a le quali ne la fine di questo trattato è bello intendere. Potrebbe dire ser Manfredi da Vico, che ora Pretore si chiama e Prefetto: 'Come che io mi sia, io reduco a memoria e rappresento li miei maggiori, che per loro nobilitade meritaro l'officio de la Prefettura, e meritaro di porre mano a lo coronamento de lo Imperio, meritaro di ricevere la rosa dal romano Pastore: onore deggio ricevere e reverenza da la gente'. E questa è l'una questione. 3. L'altra è, che potrebbe dire quelli da Santo Nazzaro di Pavia, e quelli de li Piscitelli da Napoli: 'Se la nobilitade è quello che detto è, cioè seme divino ne la umana anima graziosamente posto, e le progenie, o vero schiatte, non hanno anima, sì come è manifesto, nulla progenie, o vero schiatta, nobile dicere si potrebbe: e questo è contra l'oppinione di coloro che le nostre progenie dicono essere nobilissime in loro cittadi'. 4. A la prima questione risponde Giovenale ne l'ottava satira, quando comincia quasi esclamando: «Che fanno queste onoranze che rimangono da li antichi, se per colui che di quelle si vuole ammantare male si vive? se per colui che de li suoi antichi ragiona e mostra le grandi e mirabili opere, s'intende a misere e vili operazioni? Avvegna [che, «chi dicerà»], dice esso poeta satiro, «nobile per la buona generazione quelli che de la buona generazione degno non è? Questo non è altro che chiamare lo nano gigante». 5. Poi appresso, a questo cotale dice: «Da te a la statua fatta in memoria del tuo antico non ha dissimilitudine altra, se non che la sua testa è di marmo, e la tua vive». E in questo, con reverenza lo dico, mi discordo dal Poeta, chè la statua di marmo, di legno o di metallo, rimasa per memoria d'alcuno valente uomo, si dissimiglia ne lo effetto molto dal malvagio discendente. 6. Però che la statua sempre afferma la buona oppinione in quelli che hanno udito la buona fama di colui cui è la statua, e ne li altri genera: lo ma[l]estr[u]o figlio o nepote fa tutto lo contrario, chè l'oppinione di coloro che hanno udito bene de li suoi maggiori, fa più debile; chè dice alcuno loro pensiero: 'Non può essere che de li maggiori di costui sia tanto quanto si dice, poi che de la loro semenza sì fatta pianta si vede'. Per che non onore, ma disonore dee ricevere quelli che a li buoni mala testimonianza porta. 7. E però

dice Tullio che ‘lo figlio del valente uomo dee procurare di rendere al padre buona testimonianza’. Onde, al mio giudicio, così come chi uno valente uomo infama è degno d’essere fuggito da la gente e non ascoltato, così lo ma[l]estr[u]o disceso de li buoni maggiori è degno d’essere da tutti scacciato, e de’ si lo buono uomo chiudere li occhi per non vedere quello vituperio vituperante de la bontade, che in sola la memoria è rimasa. E questo basti, al presente, a la prima questione che si movea. 8. A la seconda questione si può rispondere, che una progenie per sè non hae anima, e ben è vero che nobile si dice ed è per certo modo. Onde è da sapere che ogni tutto si fa de le sue parti. È alcuno tutto che ha una essenza simplice con le sue parti, sì come in uno uomo è una essenza di tutto e di ciascuna parte sua; e ciò che si dice ne la parte, per quello medesimo modo si dice essere in tutto. 9. Un altro tutto è che non ha essenza comune con le parti, sì come una massa di grano; ma è la sua una essenza secondaria che resulta da molti grani, che vera e prima essenza in loro hanno. E in questo tutto cotale si dicono essere le qualitadi de le parti così secondamente come l’essere; onde si dice una bianca massa, perchè li grani onde è la massa sono bianchi. 10. Veramente questa bianchezza è pur ne li grani prima, e secondariamente resulta in tutta la massa, e così secondariamente bianca dicere si può; e per cotale modo si può dicere nobile una schiatta, o vero una progenie. Onde è da sapere che, sì come a fare una [bianca] massa convegnono vincere li bianchi grani, così a fare una nobile progenie convegnono in essa li nobili uomini [vincere] (dico ‘vincere’ essere più che li altri), sì che la bontade con la sua grida oscuri e celi lo contrario che dentro è. 11. E sì come d’una massa bianca di grano si potrebbe levare a grano a grano lo formento, e a grano [a grano] restituire meliga rossa, e tutta la massa finalmente cangerebbe colore; così de la nobile progenie potrebbero li buoni morire a uno a uno e nascere in quella li malvagi, tanto che cangerebbe lo nome, e non nobile ma vile da dire sarebbe. E così basti a la seconda questione essere risposto.

CAPITOLO XXX

1. Come di sopra nel terzo capitolo di questo trattato si dimostra, questa canzone ha tre parti principali. Per che, ragionate le due (de le quali la prima cominciò nel capitolo predetto, e la seconda nel sestodecimo; sicchè la prima per tredici e la seconda per quattordici è determinata, sanza lo proemio del trattato de la canzone, che in due capitoli si comprese), in questo trentesimo e ultimo capitolo, de la terza parte principale brievemente è da ragionare, la quale per tornata di questa canzone fatta fu ad alcuno adornamento, e comincia: Contra-li-erranti mia, tu te n'andrai. 2. E qui primamente si vuole sapere che ciascuno buono fabricatore, ne la fine del suo lavoro, quello nobilitare e abbellire dee in quanto puote, acciò che più celebre e più prezioso da lui si parta. E questo intendo, non come buono fabricatore ma come seguitatore di quello, fare in questa parte. 3. Dico adunque: Contra-li-erranti mia. Questo Contra-li-erranti è tutto una par[ola], e è nome d'esta canzone, tolto per essemplo del buono frate Tommaso d'Aquino, che a uno suo libro, che fece a confusione di tutti quelli che disviano da nostra Fede, puose nome Contra-li-Gentili. 4. Dico adunque che 'tu andrai': quasi dica: 'Tu se' omai perfetta, e tempo è di non stare ferma, ma di gire, chè la tua impresa è grande'; e quando tu sarai In parte dove sia la donna nostra, dille lo tuo mestiere. Ove è da notare che, sì come dice nostro Signore, non si deono le margarite gittare innanzi a li porci, però che a loro non è prode, e a le margarite è danno; e, come dice Esopo poeta ne la prima Favola, più è prode al gallo uno grano che una margarita, e però questa lascia e quello coglie. 5. E in ciò considerando, a cautela di ciò comando a la canzone che suo mestiere discuopra là dove questa donna, cioè la filosofia, si troverà. Allora si troverà questa donna nobilissima quando si truova la sua camera, cioè l'anima in cui essa alberga. Ed essa filosofia non solamente alberga pur ne li sapienti, ma eziandio, come provato è di sopra in altro trattato, essa è dovunque alberga l'amore di quella. E a questi cotali dico che manifesti lo suo mestiere, perchè a loro sarà utile la sua sentenza, e da loro ricolta. 6. E dico ad essa: Dì a questa donna, «Io vo parlando de l'amica vostra». Bene è sua amica nobilitade; chè tanto l'una con l'altra s'ama, che nobilitate sempre la dimanda, e filosofia non volge lo sguardo suo dolcissimo a l'altra parte. Oh quanto e come bello adornamento è questo che ne l'ultimo di questa canzone si dà ad essa, chiamandola amica di quella la cui propria ragione è nel secretissimo de la divina mente!

DIVINA COMMEDIA

Composta secondo i critici tra il 1304 e il 1321, la Commedia è l'opera più celebre di Dante, nonché una delle più importanti testimonianze della civiltà medievale; conosciuta e studiata in tutto il mondo, è ritenuta da alcuni il più grande capolavoro della letteratura di tutti i tempi.

Il poema è diviso in tre parti, chiamate cantiche (Inferno, Purgatorio e Paradiso), ognuna delle quali composta da 33 canti (tranne l'Inferno, che contiene un ulteriore canto proemiale). Il poeta narra di un viaggio attraverso i tre regni ultraterreni che lo condurrà fino alla visione della Trinità. La sua rappresentazione immaginaria e allegorica dell'oltretomba cristiano è un culmine della visione medioevale del mondo sviluppatasi nella Chiesa cattolica.

L'opera ebbe subito uno straordinario successo, e contribuì in maniera determinante al processo di consolidamento del dialetto toscano come lingua italiana. Il testo, del quale non si possiede l'autografo, fu infatti copiato sin dai primissimi anni della sua diffusione, e fino all'avvento della stampa, in un ampio numero di manoscritti. Parallelamente si diffuse la pratica della chiosa e del commento al testo, dando vita a una tradizione di letture e di studi danteschi mai interrotta; si parla così di secolare commento. La vastità delle testimonianze manoscritte della Commedia ha comportato una oggettiva difficoltà nella definizione del testo critico.

Oggi si dispone di un'edizione di riferimento realizzata da Giorgio Petrocchi. Più di recente due diverse edizioni critiche sono state curate da Antonio Lanza e Federico Sanguineti.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

INFERNO

Il vero e proprio viaggio attraverso l'Inferno ha inizio nel Canto III (nel precedente Dante esprime i suoi dubbi e le sue paure a Virgilio riguardo al viaggio che stanno per compiere). Dante e Virgilio si trovano sotto la città di Gerusalemme, davanti alla grande porta su cui sono impressi i versi celeberrimi che aprono questo canto. L'ultimo di quei versi: "Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate", incute nuovi dubbi e nuovo timore in Dante, ma il suo maestro e guida gli sorride e lo prende per mano perché ormai bisogna andare avanti. In questo luogo senza tempo e senza luce, l'Antinferno, stazionano per sempre gli ignavi, ossia quelli che in vita non vollero prendere posizioni, ed ora sono ritenuti indegni sia di premio (Paradiso) che di castigo (Inferno); poco più in là sulla riva dell'Acheronte (il primo fiume infernale), stanno provvisoriamente le anime che devono raggiungere l'altra riva, in attesa che Caronte, il primo guardiano infernale, le spinga nella sua barca e le traghetti di là.

L'inferno dantesco è immaginato come una serie di anelli numerati, sempre più stretti che si succedono in sequenza e formano un tronco di cono rovesciato; l'estremità più stretta si trova in corrispondenza del centro della Terra ed è interamente occupata da Lucifero che, movendo le sue enormi ali, produce un vento gelido: è il ghiaccio la massima pena. In questo Inferno, ad ogni peccato, corrisponde un cerchio, ed ogni cerchio successivo è più profondo del precedente e più vicino a Lucifero; più grave è il peccato, maggiore sarà il numero del cerchio.

Canto primo

Incomincia la Comedia di Dante Alleghieri di Fiorenza, ne la quale tratta de le pene e punimenti de' vizi e de' meriti e premi de le virtù. Comincia il canto primo de la prima parte nel qual l'auttore fa proemio a tutta l'opera.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
ché la diritta via era smarrita.

Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura!

Tant'è amara che poco è più morte;
ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,
dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v' ho scorte.

Io non so ben ridir com'i' v'intrai,
tant'era pien di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abbandonai.

Ma poi ch'i' fui al piè d'un colle giunto,
là dove terminava quella valle
che m'avea di paura il cor compunto,

guardai in alto e vidi le sue spalle
vestite già de' raggi del pianeta
che mena dritto altrui per ogne calle.

Allor fu la paura un poco queta,
che nel lago del cor m'era durata
la notte ch'i' passai con tanta pieta.

E come quei che con lena affannata,
uscito fuor del pelago a la riva,
si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata,

così l’animo mio, ch’ancor fuggiva,
si volse a retro a rimirar lo passo
che non lasciò già mai persona viva.

Poi ch’èi posato un poco il corpo lasso,
ripresi via per la piaggia diserta,
sì che ‘l piè fermo sempre era ‘l più basso.

Ed ecco, quasi al cominciar de l’erta,
una lonza leggera e presta molto,
che di pel macolato era coverta;

e non mi si partia dinanzi al volto,
anzi ‘mpediva tanto il mio cammino,
ch’i’ fui per ritornar più volte vòlto.

Temp’era dal principio del mattino,
e ‘l sol montava ‘n sù con quelle stelle
ch’eran con lui quando l’amor divino

mosse di prima quelle cose belle;
sì ch’a bene sperar m’era cagione
di quella fiera a la gaetta pelle

l’ora del tempo e la dolce stagione;
ma non sì che paura non mi desse
la vista che m’apparve d’un leone.

Questi parea che contra me venisse
con la test’alta e con rabbiosa fame,
sì che parea che l’aere ne tremesse.

Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame
sembiava carca ne la sua magrezza,
e molte genti fé già viver grame,

questa mi porse tanto di gravezza
con la paura ch’uscia di sua vista,
ch’io perdei la speranza de l’altezza.

E qual è quei che volontieri acquista,
e giugne ‘l tempo che perder lo face,
che ‘n tutti suoi pensier piange e s’attrista;

tal mi fece la bestia sanza pace,
che, venendomi ‘ncontro, a poco a poco
mi ripigneva là dove ‘l sol tace.

Mentre ch’i’ rovinava in basso loco,
dinanzi a li occhi mi si fu offerto
chi per lungo silenzio parea fioco.

Quando vidi costui nel gran diserto,
“Miserere di me”, gridai a lui,
“qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!”.

Rispuosemi: “Non omo, omo già fui,
e li parenti miei furon lombardi,
mantoani per patrïa ambedui.

Nacqui sub Iulio, ancor che fosse tardi,
e vissi a Roma sotto ‘l buono Augusto
nel tempo de li dèi falsi e bugiardi.

Poeta fui, e cantai di quel giusto
figliuol d’Anchise che venne di Troia,
poi che ‘l superbo Ilïón fu combusto.

Ma tu perché ritorni a tanta noia?
perché non sali il dilettoso monte
ch’è principio e cagion di tutta gioia?”.

“Or se’ tu quel Virgilio e quella fonte
che spandi di parlar sì largo fiume?”,
rispuos’io lui con vergognosa fronte.

“O de li altri poeti onore e lume,
vagliami ‘l lungo studio e ‘l grande amore
che m’ ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume.

Tu se’ lo mio maestro e ‘l mio autore,
tu se’ solo colui da cu’ io tolsi
lo bello stilo che m’ ha fatto onore.

Vedi la bestia per cu’ io mi volsi;
aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,
ch’ella mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi”.

“A te convien tenere altro vïaggio”,
rispuose, poi che lagrimar mi vide,
“se vuo’ campar d’esto loco selvaggio;

ché questa bestia, per la qual tu gride,
non lascia altrui passar per la sua via,
ma tanto lo ‘mpedisce che l’uccide;

e ha natura sì malvagia e ria,
che mai non empie la bramosa voglia,
e dopo ‘l pasto ha più fame che pria.

Molti son li animali a cui s’ammoglia,
e più saranno ancora, infin che ‘l veltro
verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.

Questi non ciberà terra né peltro,
ma sapïenza, amore e virtute,
e sua nazion sarà tra feltro e feltro.

Di quella umile Italia fia salute
per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,
Eurialo e Turno e Niso di ferute.

Questi la caccerà per ogne villa,
fin che l’avrà rimessa ne lo ‘nferno,
là onde ‘nvidia prima dipartilla.

Ond’io per lo tuo me’ penso e discerno
che tu mi segui, e io sarò tua guida,
e trarrotti di qui per loco etterno;

ove udirai le disperate strida,
vedrai li antichi spiriti dolenti,
ch’a la seconda morte ciascun grida;

e vederai color che son contenti
nel foco, perché speran di venire
quando che sia a le beate genti.

A le quai poi se tu vorrai salire,
anima fia a ciò più di me degna:
con lei ti lascerò nel mio partire;

ché quello imperador che là sù regna,
perch’i’ fu’ ribellante a la sua legge,
non vuol che ‘n sua città per me si vegna.

In tutte parti impera e quivi regge;
quivi è la sua città e l’alto seggio:
oh felice colui cu’ ivi elegge!”.

E io a lui: “Poeta, io ti richeggio
per quello Dio che tu non conoscesti,
acciò ch’io fugga questo male e peggio,

che tu mi meni là dov’or dicesti,
sì ch’io veggia la porta di san Pietro
e color cui tu fai cotanto mesti”.

Allor si mosse, e io li tenni dietro.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto secondo

Canto secondo de la prima parte ne la quale fa proemio a la prima cantica cioè a la prima parte di questo libro solamente, e in questo canto tratta l'auttore come trovò Virgilio, il quale il fece sicuro del cammino per le tre donne che di lui aveano cura ne la corte del cielo.

Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
toglieva li animai che sono in terra
da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno

m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,
che ritrarrà la mente che non erra.

O muse, o alto ingegno, or m'aiutate;
o mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi,
qui si parrà la tua nobilitate.

Io cominciai: "Poeta che mi guidi,
guarda la mia virtù s'ell'è possente,
prima ch'a l'alto passo tu mi fidi.

Tu dici che di Silvïo il parente,
corruttibile ancora, ad immortale
secolo andò, e fu sensibilmente.

Però, se l'avversario d'ogne male
cortese i fu, pensando l'alto effetto
ch'uscir dovea di lui, e 'l chi e 'l quale

non pare indegno ad omo d'intelletto;
ch'e' fu de l'alma Roma e di suo impero
ne l'empireo ciel per padre eletto:

la quale e 'l quale, a voler dir lo vero,
fu stabilita per lo loco santo
u' siede il successor del maggior Piero.

Per quest’andata onde li dai tu vanto,
intese cose che furon cagione
di sua vittoria e del papale ammanto.

Andovvi poi lo Vas d’elezïone,
per recarne conforto a quella fede
ch’è principio a la via di salvazione.

Ma io, perché venirvi? o chi ‘l concede?
Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono;
me degno a ciò né io né altri ‘l crede.

Per che, se del venire io m’abbandono,
temo che la venuta non sia folle.
Se’ savio; intendi me’ ch’i’ non ragiono”.

E qual è quei che disvuol ciò che volle
e per novi pensier cangia proposta,
sì che dal cominciar tutto si tolle,

tal mi fec’ïo ‘n quella oscura costa,
perché, pensando, consumai la ‘mpresa
che fu nel cominciar cotanto tosta.

“S’i’ ho ben la parola tua intesa”,
rispuose del magnanimo quell’ombra,
“l’anima tua è da viltade offesa;

la qual molte fïate l’omo ingombra
sì che d’onrata impresa lo rivolve,
come falso veder bestia quand’ombra.

Da questa tema acciò che tu ti solve,
dirotti perch’io venni e quel ch’io ‘ntesi
nel primo punto che di te mi dolve.

Io era tra color che son sospesi,
e donna mi chiamò beata e bella,
tal che di comandare io la richiesi.

Lucevan li occhi suoi più che la stella;
e cominciommi a dir soave e piana,
con angelica voce, in sua favella:

“O anima cortese mantoana,
di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura,
e durerà quanto ‘l mondo lontana,

l’amico mio, e non de la ventura,
ne la diserta piaggia è impedito
sì nel cammin, che vòlt’è per paura;

e temo che non sia già sì smarrito,
ch’io mi sia tardi al soccorso levata,
per quel ch’i’ ho di lui nel cielo udito.

Or movi, e con la tua parola ornata
e con ciò c’ ha mestieri al suo campare,
l’aiuta sì ch’i’ ne sia consolata.

I’ son Beatrice che ti faccio andare;
vegno del loco ove tornar disio;
amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare.

Quando sarò dinanzi al segnor mio,
di te mi loderò sovente a lui”.
Tacette allora, e poi comincia’ io:

“O donna di virtù sola per cui
l’umana spezie eccede ogne contento
di quel ciel c’ ha minor li cerchi sui,

tanto m’aggrada il tuo comandamento,
che l’ubidir, se già fosse, m’è tardi;
più non t’è uo’ ch’aprirmi il tuo talento.

Ma dimmi la cagion che non ti guardi
de lo scender qua giuso in questo centro
de l’ampio loco ove tornar tu ardi”.

“Da che tu vuo’ saver cotanto a dentro,
dirotti brievemente”, mi rispuose,
“perch’i’ non temo di venir qua entro.

Temer si dee di sole quelle cose
c’ hanno potenza di fare altrui male;
de l’altre no, ché non son paurose.

I’ son fatta da Dio, sua mercé, tale,
che la vostra miseria non mi tange,
né fiamma d’esto ‘ncendio non m’assale.

Donna è gentil nel ciel che si compiange
di questo ‘mpedimento ov’io ti mando,
sì che duro giudicio là sù frange.

Questa chiese Lucia in suo dimando
e disse: - Or ha bisogno il tuo fedele
di te, e io a te lo raccomando -.

Lucia, nimica di ciascun crudele,
si mosse, e venne al loco dov’i’ era,
che mi sedea con l’antica Rachele.

Disse: - Beatrice, loda di Dio vera,
ché non soccorri quei che t’amò tanto,
ch’uscì per te de la volgare schiera?

Non odi tu la pieta del suo pianto,
non vedi tu la morte che ‘l combatte
su la fiumana ove ‘l mar non ha vanto? -.

Al mondo non fur mai persone ratte
a far lor pro o a fuggir lor danno,
com’io, dopo cotai parole fatte,

venni qua giù del mio beato scanno,
fidandomi del tuo parlare onesto,
ch’onora te e quei ch’udito l’ hanno”.

Poscia che m’ebbe ragionato questo,
li occhi lucenti lagrimando volse,
per che mi fece del venir più presto.

E venni a te così com’ella volse:
d’inanzi a quella fiera ti levai
che del bel monte il corto andar ti tolse.

Dunque: che è perché, perché restai,
perché tanta viltà nel core allette,
perché ardire e franchezza non hai,

poscia che tai tre donne benedette
curan di te ne la corte del cielo,
e ‘l mio parlar tanto ben ti promette?”.

Quali fioretti dal notturno gelo
chinati e chiusi, poi che ‘l sol li ‘mbianca,
si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo,

tal mi fec’io di mia virtude stanca,
e tanto buono ardire al cor mi corse,
ch’i’ cominciai come persona franca:

“Oh pietosa colei che mi soccorse!
e te cortese ch’ubidisti tosto
a le vere parole che ti porse!

Tu m’ hai con disiderio il cor disposto
sì al venir con le parole tue,
ch’i’ son tornato nel primo proposto.

Or va, ch’un sol volere è d’ambedue:
tu duca, tu segnore e tu maestro”.
Così li dissi; e poi che mosso fue,

intrai per lo cammino alto e silvestro.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto terzo

Canto terzo, nel quale tratta de la porta e de l'entrata de l'inferno e del fiume d'Acheronte, de la pena di coloro che vissero sanza opere di fama degne, e come il demonio Caron li trae in sua nave e come elli parlò a l'auttore; e tocca qui questo vizio ne la persona di papa Cilestino.

'Per me si va ne la città dolente,
per me si va ne l'etterno dolore,
per me si va tra la perduta gente.

Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;
fecemi la divina podestate,
la somma sapïenza e 'l primo amore.

Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create
se non etterne, e io etterna duro.
Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate'.

Queste parole di colore oscuro
vid'ïo scritte al sommo d'una porta;
per ch'io: "Maestro, il senso lor m'è duro".

Ed elli a me, come persona accorta:
"Qui si convien lasciare ogne sospetto;
ogne viltà convien che qui sia morta.

Noi siam venuti al loco ov'i' t' ho detto
che tu vedrai le genti dolorose
c' hanno perduto il ben de l'intelletto".

E poi che la sua mano a la mia puose
con lieto volto, ond'io mi confortai,
mi mise dentro a le segrete cose.

Quivi sospiri, pianti e alti guai
risonavan per l'aere sanza stelle,
per ch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai.

Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,
parole di dolore, accenti d’ira,
voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle

facevano un tumulto, il qual s’aggira
sempre in quell’aura sanza tempo tinta,
come la rena quando turbo spira.

E io ch’avea d’error la testa cinta,
dissi: “Maestro, che è quel ch’i’ odo?
e che gent’è che par nel duol sì vinta?”.

Ed elli a me: “Questo misero modo
tegnon l’anime triste di coloro
che visser sanza ‘nfamia e sanza lodo.

Mischiate sono a quel cattivo coro
de li angeli che non furon ribelli
né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro.

Caccianli i ciel per non esser men belli,
né lo profondo inferno li riceve,
ch’alcuna gloria i rei avrebber d’elli”.

E io: “Maestro, che è tanto greve
a lor che lamentar li fa sì forte?”.
Rispuose: “Dicerolti molto breve.

Questi non hanno speranza di morte,
e la lor cieca vita è tanto bassa,
che ‘nvidïosi son d’ogne altra sorte.

Fama di loro il mondo esser non lassa;
misericordia e giustizia li sdegna:
non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa”.

E io, che riguardai, vidi una ‘nsegna
che girando correva tanto ratta,
che d’ogne posa mi parea indegna;

e dietro le venìa sì lunga tratta
di gente, ch’i’ non averei creduto
che morte tanta n’avesse disfatta.

Poscia ch’io v’ebbi alcun riconosciuto,
vidi e conobbi l’ombra di colui
che fece per viltade il gran rifiuto.

Incontanente intesi e certo fui
che questa era la setta d’i cattivi,
a Dio spiacenti e a’ nemici sui.

Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur vivi,
erano ignudi e stimolati molto
da mosconi e da vespe ch’eran ivi.

Elle rigavan lor di sangue il volto,
che, mischiato di lagrime, a’ lor piedi
da fastidiosi vermi era ricolto.

E poi ch’a riguardar oltre mi diedi,
vidi genti a la riva d’un gran fiume;
per ch’io dissi: “Maestro, or mi concedi

ch’i’ sappia quali sono, e qual costume
le fa di trapassar parer sì pronte,
com’i’ discerno per lo fioco lume”.

Ed elli a me: “Le cose ti fier conte
quando noi fermerem li nostri passi
su la trista riviera d’Acheronte”.

Allor con li occhi vergognosi e bassi,
temendo no ‘l mio dir li fosse grave,
infino al fiume del parlar mi trassi.

Ed ecco verso noi venir per nave
un vecchio, bianco per antico pelo,
gridando: “Guai a voi, anime prave!

Non isperate mai veder lo cielo:
i’ vegno per menarvi a l’altra riva
ne le tenebre etterne, in caldo e ‘n gelo.

E tu che se’ costì, anima viva,
pàrtiti da cotesti che son morti”.
Ma poi che vide ch’io non mi partiva,

disse: “Per altra via, per altri porti
verrai a piaggia, non qui, per passare:
più lieve legno convien che ti porti”.

E ‘l duca lui: “Caron, non ti crucciare:
vuolsi così colà dove si puote
ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare”.

Quinci fuor quete le lanose gote
al nocchier de la livida palude,
che ‘ntorno a li occhi avea di fiamme rote.

Ma quell’anime, ch’eran lasse e nude,
cangiar colore e dibattero i denti,
ratto che ‘nteser le parole crude.

Bestemmiavano Dio e lor parenti,
l’umana spezie e ‘l loco e ‘l tempo e ‘l seme
di lor semenza e di lor nascimenti.

Poi si ritrasser tutte quante insieme,
forte piangendo, a la riva malvagia
ch’attende ciascun uom che Dio non teme.

Caron dimonio, con occhi di bragia
loro accennando, tutte le raccoglie;
batte col remo qualunque s’adagia.

Come d’autunno si levan le foglie
l’una appresso de l’altra, fin che ‘l ramo
vede a la terra tutte le sue spoglie,

similemente il mal seme d’Adamo
gittansi di quel lito ad una ad una,
per cenni come augel per suo richiamo.

Così sen vanno su per l’onda bruna,
e avanti che sien di là discese,
anche di qua nuova schiera s’auna.

“Figliuol mio”, disse ‘l maestro cortese,
“quelli che muoion ne l’ira di Dio
tutti convegnon qui d’ogne paese;

e pronti sono a trapassar lo rio,
ché la divina giustizia li sprona,
sì che la tema si volve in disio.

Quinci non passa mai anima buona;
e però, se Caron di te si lagna,
ben puoi sapere omai che ‘l suo dir suona”.

Finito questo, la buia campagna
tremò sì forte, che de lo spavento
la mente di sudore ancor mi bagna.

La terra lagrimosa diede vento,
che balenò una luce vermiglia
la qual mi vinse ciascun sentimento;

e caddi come l’uom cui sonno piglia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quarto

Canto quarto, nel quale mostra del primo cerchio de l'inferno, luogo detto Limbo, e quivi tratta de la pena de' non battezzati e de' valenti uomini, li quali moriron innanzi l'avvenimento di Gesù Cristo e non conobbero debitamente Idio; e come Iesù Cristo trasse di questo luogo molte anime.

Ruppemi l'alto sonno ne la testa
un greve truono, sì ch'io mi riscossi
come persona ch'è per forza desta;

e l'occhio riposato intorno mossi,
dritto levato, e fiso riguardai
per conoscer lo loco dov'io fossi.

Vero è che 'n su la proda mi trovai
de la valle d'abisso dolorosa
che 'ntrono accoglie d'infiniti guai.

Oscura e profonda era e nebulosa
tanto che, per ficcar lo viso a fondo,
io non vi discernea alcuna cosa.

"Or discendiam qua giù nel cieco mondo",
cominciò il poeta tutto smorto.
"Io sarò primo, e tu sarai secondo".

E io, che del color mi fui accorto,
dissi: "Come verrò, se tu paventi
che suoli al mio dubbiare esser conforto?".

Ed elli a me: "L'angoscia de le genti
che son qua giù, nel viso mi dipigne
quella pietà che tu per tema senti.

Andiam, ché la via lunga ne sospigne".
Così si mise e così mi fé intrare
nel primo cerchio che l'abisso cigne.

Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
non avea pianto mai che di sospiri
che l’aura etterna facevan tremare;

ciò avvenia di duol sanza martìri,
ch’avean le turbe, ch’eran molte e grandi,
d’infanti e di femmine e di viri.

Lo buon maestro a me: “Tu non dimandi
che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?
Or vo’ che sappi, innanzi che più andi,

ch’ei non peccaro; e s’elli hanno mercedi,
non basta, perché non ebber battesmo,
ch’è porta de la fede che tu credi;

e s’e’ furon dinanzi al cristianesmo,
non adorar debitamente a Dio:
e di questi cotai son io medesmo.

Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
che sanza speme vivemo in disio”.

Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo ‘ntesi,
però che gente di molto valore
conobbi che ‘n quel limbo eran sospesi.

“Dimmi, maestro mio, dimmi, segnore”,
comincia’ io per volere esser certo
di quella fede che vince ogne errore:

“uscicci mai alcuno, o per suo merto
o per altrui, che poi fosse beato?”.
E quei che ‘ntese il mio parlar coverto,

rispuose: “Io era nuovo in questo stato,
quando ci vidi venire un possente,
con segno di vittoria coronato.

Trasseci l’ombra del primo parente,
d’Abèl suo figlio e quella di Noè,
di Moïsè legista e ubidente;

Abraàm patrïarca e Davìd re,
Israèl con lo padre e co’ suoi nati
e con Rachele, per cui tanto fé,

e altri molti, e feceli beati.
E vo’ che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi,
spiriti umani non eran salvati”.

Non lasciavam l’andar perch’ei dicessi,
ma passavam la selva tuttavia,
la selva, dico, di spiriti spessi.

Non era lunga ancor la nostra via
di qua dal sonno, quand’io vidi un foco
ch’emisperio di tenebre vincia.

Di lungi n’eravamo ancora un poco,
ma non sì ch’io non discernessi in parte
ch’orrevol gente possedea quel loco.

“O tu ch’onori scïenzïa e arte,
questi chi son c’ hanno cotanta onranza,
che dal modo de li altri li diparte?”.

E quelli a me: “L’onrata nominanza
che di lor suona sù ne la tua vita,
grazïa acquista in ciel che sì li avanza”.

Intanto voce fu per me udita:
“Onorate l’altissimo poeta;
l’ombra sua torna, ch’era dipartita”.

Poi che la voce fu restata e queta,
vidi quattro grand’ombre a noi venire:
sembianz’avevan né trista né lieta.

Lo buon maestro cominciò a dire:
“Mira colui con quella spada in mano,
che vien dinanzi ai tre sì come sire:

quelli è Omero poeta sovrano;
l’altro è Orazio satiro che vene;
Ovidio è ‘l terzo, e l’ultimo Lucano.

Però che ciascun meco si convene
nel nome che sonò la voce sola,
fannomi onore, e di ciò fanno bene”.

Così vid’i’ adunar la bella scola
di quel segnor de l’altissimo canto
che sovra li altri com’aquila vola.

Da ch’ebber ragionato insieme alquanto,
volsersi a me con salutevol cenno,
e ‘l mio maestro sorrise di tanto;

e più d’onore ancora assai mi fenno,
ch’e’ sì mi fecer de la loro schiera,
sì ch’io fui sesto tra cotanto senno.

Così andammo infino a la lumera,
parlando cose che ‘l tacere è bello,
sì com’era ‘l parlar colà dov’era.

Venimmo al piè d’un nobile castello,
sette volte cerchiato d’alte mura,
difeso intorno d’un bel fiumicello.

Questo passammo come terra dura;
per sette porte intrai con questi savi:
giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura.

Genti v’eran con occhi tardi e gravi,
di grande autorità ne’ lor sembianti:
parlavan rado, con voci soavi.

Traemmoci così da l’un de’ canti,
in loco aperto, luminoso e alto,
sì che veder si potien tutti quanti.

Colà diritto, sovra ‘l verde smalto,
mi fuor mostrati li spiriti magni,
che del vedere in me stesso m’essalto.

I’ vidi Eletra con molti compagni,
tra ‘ quai conobbi Ettòr ed Enea,
Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni.

Vidi Cammilla e la Pantasilea;
da l’altra parte vidi ‘l re Latino
che con Lavina sua figlia sedea.

Vidi quel Bruto che cacciò Tarquino,
Lucrezia, Iulia, Marzïa e Corniglia;
e solo, in parte, vidi ‘l Saladino.

Poi ch’innalzai un poco più le ciglia,
vidi ‘l maestro di color che sanno
seder tra filosofica famiglia.

Tutti lo miran, tutti onor li fanno:
quivi vid’ïo Socrate e Platone,
che ‘nnanzi a li altri più presso li stanno;

Democrito che ‘l mondo a caso pone,
Dïogenès, Anassagora e Tale,
Empedoclès, Eraclito e Zenone;

e vidi il buono accoglitor del quale,
Dïascoride dico; e vidi Orfeo,
Tulïo e Lino e Seneca morale;

Euclide geomètra e Tolomeo,
Ipocràte, Avicenna e Galïeno,
Averoìs che ‘l gran comento feo.

Io non posso ritrar di tutti a pieno,
però che sì mi caccia il lungo tema,
che molte volte al fatto il dir vien meno.

La sesta compagnia in due si scema:
per altra via mi mena il savio duca,
fuor de la queta, ne l’aura che trema.

E vegno in parte ove non è che luca.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quinto

Canto quinto, nel quale mostra del secondo cerchio de l'inferno, e tratta de la pena del vizio de la lussuria ne la persona di più famosi gentili uomini.

Così discesi del cerchio primaio
giù nel secondo, che men loco cinghia
e tanto più dolor, che punge a guaio.

Stavvi Minòs orribilmente, e ringhia:
essamina le colpe ne l'intrata;
giudica e manda secondo ch'avvinghia.

Dico che quando l'anima mal nata
li vien dinanzi, tutta si confessa;
e quel conoscitor de le peccata

vede qual loco d'inferno è da essa;
cignesi con la coda tante volte
quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa.

Sempre dinanzi a lui ne stanno molte:
vanno a vicenda ciascuna al giudizio,
dicono e odono e poi son giù volte.

"O tu che vieni al doloroso ospizio",
disse Minòs a me quando mi vide,
lasciando l'atto di cotanto offizio,

"guarda com'entri e di cui tu ti fide;
non t'inganni l'ampiezza de l'intrare!".
E 'l duca mio a lui: "Perché pur gride?

Non impedir lo suo fatale andare:
vuolsi così colà dove si puote
ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare".

Or incomincian le dolenti note
a farmisi sentire; or son venuto

là dove molto pianto mi percuote. 27

Io venni in loco d’ogne luce muto,
che mugghia come fa mar per tempesta,
se da contrari venti è combattuto. 30

La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,
mena li spirti con la sua rapina;
voltando e percotendo li molesta. 33

Quando giungon davanti a la ruina,
quivi le strida, il compianto, il lamento;
bestemmian quivi la virtù divina. 36

Intesi ch’a così fatto tormento
enno dannati i peccator carnali,
che la ragion sommettono al talento. 39

E come li stornei ne portan l’ali
nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena,
così quel fiato li spiriti mali 42

di qua, di là, di giù, di sù li mena;
nulla speranza li conforta mai,
non che di posa, ma di minor pena. 45

E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
faccendo in aere di sé lunga riga,
così vid’io venir, traendo guai, 48

ombre portate da la detta briga;
per ch’i’ dissi: “Maestro, chi son quelle
genti che l’aura nera sì gastiga?”. 51

“La prima di color di cui novelle
tu vuo’ saper”, mi disse quelli allotta,
“fu imperadrice di molte favelle. 54

A vizio di lussuria fu sì rotta,
che libito fé licito in sua legge,

per tòrre il biasmo in che era condotta. 57

Ell’è Semiramìs, di cui si legge
che succedette a Nino e fu sua sposa:
tenne la terra che ‘l Soldan corregge. 60

L’altra è colei che s’ancise amorosa,
e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo;
poi è Cleopatràs lussurïosa. 63

Elena vedi, per cui tanto reo
tempo si volse, e vedi ‘l grande Achille,
che con amore al fine combatteo. 66

Vedi Parìs, Tristano”; e più di mille
ombre mostrommi e nominommi a dito,
ch’amor di nostra vita dipartille. 69

Poscia ch’io ebbi ‘l mio dottore udito
nomar le donne antiche e ‘ cavalieri,
pietà mi giunse, e fui quasi smarrito. 72

I’ cominciai: “Poeta, volontieri
parlerei a quei due che ‘nsieme vanno,
e paion sì al vento esser leggeri”. 75

Ed elli a me: “Vedrai quando saranno
più presso a noi; e tu allor li priega
per quello amor che i mena, ed ei verranno”. 78

Sì tosto come il vento a noi li piega,
mossi la voce: “O anime affannate,
venite a noi parlar, s’altri nol niega!”. 81

Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
con l’ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido
vegnon per l’aere, dal voler portate; 84

cotali uscir de la schiera ov’è Dido,
a noi venendo per l’aere maligno,

sì forte fu l’affettüoso grido.

“O animal grazïoso e benigno
che visitando vai per l’aere perso
noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno,

se fosse amico il re de l’universo,
noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace,
poi c’ hai pietà del nostro mal perverso.

Di quel che udire e che parlar vi piace,
noi udiremo e parleremo a voi,
mentre che ‘l vento, come fa, ci tace.

Siede la terra dove nata fui
su la marina dove ‘l Po discende
per aver pace co’ seguaci sui.

Amor, ch’al cor gentil ratto s’apprende,
prese costui de la bella persona
che mi fu tolta; e ‘l modo ancor m’offende.

Amor, ch’a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m’abbandona.

Amor condusse noi ad una morte.
Caina attende chi a vita ci spense”.
Queste parole da lor ci fuor porte.

Quand’io intesi quell’anime offense,
china’ il viso, e tanto il tenni basso,
fin che ‘l poeta mi disse: “Che pense?”.

Quando rispuosi, cominciai: “Oh lasso,
quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio
menò costoro al doloroso passo!”.

Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla’ io,
e cominciai: “Francesca, i tuoi martìri

a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.

Ma dimmi: al tempo d’i dolci sospiri,
a che e come concedette amore
che conosceste i dubbiosi disiri?”.

E quella a me: “Nessun maggior dolore
che ricordarsi del tempo felice
ne la miseria; e ciò sa ‘l tuo dottore.

Ma s’a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
dirò come colui che piange e dice.

Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto.

Per più fïate li occhi ci sospinse
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.

Quando leggemmo il disïato riso
esser basciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,

la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.
Galeotto fu ‘l libro e chi lo scrisse:
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante”.

Mentre che l’uno spirto questo disse,
l’altro piangëa; sì che di pietade
io venni men così com’io morisse.

E caddi come corpo morto cade.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto sesto

Canto sesto, nel quale mostra del terzo cerchio de l'inferno e tratta del punimento del vizio de la gola, e massimamente in persona d'un fiorentino chiamato Ciacco; in confusione di tutt'i buffoni tratta del dimonio Cerbero e narra in forma di predicere più cose a divenire a la città di Fiorenza.

Al tornar de la mente, che si chiuse
dinanzi a la pietà d'i due cognati,
che di trestizia tutto mi confuse,

novi tormenti e novi tormentati
mi veggio intorno, come ch'io mi mova
e ch'io mi volga, e come che io guati.

Io sono al terzo cerchio, de la piova
etterna, maladetta, fredda e greve;
regola e qualità mai non l'è nova.

Grandine grossa, acqua tinta e neve
per l'aere tenebroso si riversa;
pute la terra che questo riceve.

Cerbero, fiera crudele e diversa,
con tre gole caninamente latra
sovra la gente che quivi è sommersa.

Li occhi ha vermigli, la barba unta e atra,
e 'l ventre largo, e unghiate le mani;
graffia li spirti ed iscoia ed isquatra.

Urlar li fa la pioggia come cani;
de l'un de' lati fanno a l'altro schermo;
volgonsi spesso i miseri profani.

Quando ci scorse Cerbero, il gran vermo,
le bocche aperse e mostrocci le sanne;
non avea membro che tenesse fermo.

E ‘l duca mio distese le sue spanne,
prese la terra, e con piene le pugna
la gittò dentro a le bramose canne.

Qual è quel cane ch’abbaiando agogna,
e si racqueta poi che ‘l pasto morde,
ché solo a divorarlo intende e pugna,

cotai si fecer quelle facce lorde
de lo demonio Cerbero, che ‘ntrona
l’anime sì, ch’esser vorrebber sorde.

Noi passavam su per l’ombre che adona
la greve pioggia, e ponavam le piante
sovra lor vanità che par persona.

Elle giacean per terra tutte quante,
fuor d’una ch’a seder si levò, ratto
ch’ella ci vide passarsi davante.

“O tu che se’ per questo ‘nferno tratto”,
mi disse, “riconoscimi, se sai:
tu fosti, prima ch’io disfatto, fatto”.

E io a lui: “L’angoscia che tu hai
forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,
sì che non par ch’i’ ti vedessi mai.

Ma dimmi chi tu se’ che ‘n sì dolente
loco se’ messo, e hai sì fatta pena,
che, s’altra è maggio, nulla è sì spiacente”.

Ed elli a me: “La tua città, ch’è piena
d’invidia sì che già trabocca il sacco,
seco mi tenne in la vita serena.

Voi cittadini mi chiamaste Ciacco:
per la dannosa colpa de la gola,
come tu vedi, a la pioggia mi fiacco.

E io anima trista non son sola,
ché tutte queste a simil pena stanno
per simil colpa". E più non fé parola.

Io li rispuosi: "Ciacco, il tuo affanno
mi pesa sì, ch'a lagrimar mi 'nvita;
ma dimmi, se tu sai, a che verranno

li cittadin de la città partita;
s'alcun v'è giusto; e dimmi la cagione
per che l' ha tanta discordia assalita".

E quelli a me: "Dopo lunga tencione
verranno al sangue, e la parte selvaggia
caccerà l'altra con molta offensione.

Poi appresso convien che questa caggia
infra tre soli, e che l'altra sormonti
con la forza di tal che testé piaggia.

Alte terrà lungo tempo le fronti,
tenendo l'altra sotto gravi pesi,
come che di ciò pianga o che n'aonti.

Giusti son due, e non vi sono intesi;
superbia, invidia e avarizia sono
le tre faville c' hanno i cuori accesi".

Qui puose fine al lagrimabil suono.
E io a lui: "Ancor vo' che mi 'nsegni
e che di più parlar mi facci dono.

Farinata e 'l Tegghiaio, che fuor sì degni,
Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo e 'l Mosca
e li altri ch'a ben far puoser li 'ngegni,

dimmi ove sono e fa ch'io li conosca;
ché gran disio mi stringe di savere
se 'l ciel li addolcia o lo 'nferno li attosca".

E quelli: “Ei son tra l’anime più nere;
diverse colpe giù li grava al fondo:
se tanto scendi, là i potrai vedere.

Ma quando tu sarai nel dolce mondo,
priegoti ch’a la mente altrui mi rechi:
più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo”.

Li diritti occhi torse allora in biechi;
guardommi un poco e poi chinò la testa:
cadde con essa a par de li altri ciechi.

E ‘l duca disse a me: “Più non si desta
di qua dal suon de l’angelica tromba,
quando verrà la nimica podesta:

ciascun rivederà la trista tomba,
ripiglierà sua carne e sua figura,
udirà quel ch’in etterno rimbomba”.

Sì trapassammo per sozza mistura
de l’ombre e de la pioggia, a passi lenti,
toccando un poco la vita futura;

per ch’io dissi: “Maestro, esti tormenti
crescerann’ei dopo la gran sentenza,
o fier minori, o saran sì cocenti?”.

Ed elli a me: “Ritorna a tua scïenza,
che vuol, quanto la cosa è più perfetta,
più senta il bene, e così la doglienza.

Tutto che questa gente maladetta
in vera perfezion già mai non vada,
di là più che di qua essere aspetta”.

Noi aggirammo a tondo quella strada,
parlando più assai ch’i’ non ridico;
venimmo al punto dove si digrada:

quivi trovammo Pluto, il gran nemico.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto settimo

Canto settimo, dove si dimostra del quarto cerchio de l'inferno e alquanto del quinto; qui pone la pena del peccato de l'avarizia e del vizio de la prodigalità; e del dimonio Pluto; e quello che è fortuna.

"Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!",
cominciò Pluto con la voce chioccia;
e quel savio gentil, che tutto seppe,

disse per confortarmi: "Non ti noccia
la tua paura; ché, poder ch'elli abbia,
non ci torrà lo scender questa roccia".

Poi si rivolse a quella 'nfiata labbia,
e disse: "Taci, maladetto lupo!
consuma dentro te con la tua rabbia.

Non è sanza cagion l'andare al cupo:
vuolsi ne l'alto, là dove Michele
fé la vendetta del superbo strupo".

Quali dal vento le gonfiate vele
caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca,
tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele.

Così scendemmo ne la quarta lacca,
pigliando più de la dolente ripa
che 'l mal de l'universo tutto insacca.

Ahi giustizia di Dio! tante chi stipa
nove travaglie e pene quant'io viddi?
e perché nostra colpa sì ne scipa?

Come fa l'onda là sovra Cariddi,
che si frange con quella in cui s'intoppa,
così convien che qui la gente riddi.

Qui vid’i’ gente più ch’altrove troppa,
e d’una parte e d’altra, con grand’urli,
voltando pesi per forza di poppa.

Percotëansi ‘ncontro; e poscia pur lì
si rivolgea ciascun, voltando a retro,
gridando: “Perché tieni?” e “Perché burli?”.

Così tornavan per lo cerchio tetro
da ogne mano a l’opposito punto,
gridandosi anche loro ontoso metro;

poi si volgea ciascun, quand’era giunto,
per lo suo mezzo cerchio a l’altra giostra.
E io, ch’avea lo cor quasi compunto,

dissi: “Maestro mio, or mi dimostra
che gente è questa, e se tutti fuor cherci
questi chercuti a la sinistra nostra”.

Ed elli a me: “Tutti quanti fuor guerci
sì de la mente in la vita primaia,
che con misura nullo spendio ferci.

Assai la voce lor chiaro l’abbaia,
quando vegnono a’ due punti del cerchio
dove colpa contraria li dispaia.

Questi fuor cherci, che non han coperchio
piloso al capo, e papi e cardinali,
in cui usa avarizia il suo soperchio”.

E io: “Maestro, tra questi cotali
dovre’ io ben riconoscere alcuni
che furo immondi di cotesti mali”.

Ed elli a me: “Vano pensiero aduni:
la sconoscente vita che i fé sozzi,
ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruni.

In etterno verranno a li due cozzi:
questi resurgeranno del sepulcro
col pugno chiuso, e questi coi crin mozzi.

Mal dare e mal tener lo mondo pulcro
ha tolto loro, e posti a questa zuffa:
qual ella sia, parole non ci appulcro.

Or puoi, figliuol, veder la corta buffa
d'i ben che son commessi a la fortuna,
per che l'umana gente si rabuffa;

ché tutto l'oro ch'è sotto la luna
e che già fu, di quest'anime stanche
non poterebbe farne posare una".

"Maestro mio", diss'io, "or mi dì anche:
questa fortuna di che tu mi tocche,
che è, che i ben del mondo ha sì tra branche?".

E quelli a me: "Oh creature sciocche,
quanta ignoranza è quella che v'offende!
Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne 'mbocche.

Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,
fece li cieli e diè lor chi conduce
sì, ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende,

distribuendo igualmente la luce.
Similemente a li splendor mondani
ordinò general ministra e duce

che permutasse a tempo li ben vani
di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,
oltre la difension d'i senni umani;

per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,
seguendo lo giudicio di costei,
che è occulto come in erba l'angue.

Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei:
questa provede, giudica, e persegue
suo regno come il loro li altri dèi. 87

Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue:
necessità la fa esser veloce;
sì spesso vien chi vicenda consegue. 90

Quest'è colei ch'è tanto posta in croce
pur da color che le dovrien dar lode,
dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce; 93

ma ella s'è beata e ciò non ode:
con l'altre prime creature lieta
volve sua spera e beata si gode. 96

Or discendiamo omai a maggior pieta;
già ogne stella cade che saliva
quand'io mi mossi, e 'l troppo star si vieta". 99

Noi ricidemmo il cerchio a l'altra riva
sovr'una fonte che bolle e riversa
per un fossato che da lei deriva. 102

L'acqua era buia assai più che persa;
e noi, in compagnia de l'onde bige,
intrammo giù per una via diversa. 105

In la palude va c' ha nome Stige
questo tristo ruscel, quand'è disceso
al piè de le maligne piagge grige. 108

E io, che di mirare stava inteso,
vidi genti fangose in quel pantano,
ignude tutte, con sembiante offeso. 111

Queste si percotean non pur con mano,
ma con la testa e col petto e coi piedi,
troncandosi co' denti a brano a brano. 114

Lo buon maestro disse: “Figlio, or vedi
l’anime di color cui vinse l’ira;
e anche vo’ che tu per certo credi

che sotto l’acqua è gente che sospira,
e fanno pullular quest’acqua al summo,
come l’occhio ti dice, u’ che s’aggira.

Fitti nel limo dicon: “Tristi fummo
ne l’aere dolce che dal sol s’allegra,
portando dentro accidïoso fummo:

or ci attristiam ne la belletta negra”.
Quest’inno si gorgoglian ne la strozza,
ché dir nol posson con parola integra”.

Così girammo de la lorda pozza
grand’arco, tra la ripa secca e ‘l mézzo,
con li occhi vòlti a chi del fango ingozza.

Venimmo al piè d’una torre al da sezzo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ottavo

Canto ottavo, ove tratta del quinto cerchio de l'inferno e alquanto del sesto, e de la pena del peccato de l'ira, massimamente in persona d'uno cavaliere fiorentino chiamato messer Filippo Argenti, e del dimonio Flegias e de la palude di Stige e del pervenire a la città d'inferno detta Dite.

Io dico, seguitando, ch'assai prima
che noi fossimo al piè de l'alta torre,
li occhi nostri n'andar suso a la cima

per due fiammette che i vedemmo porre,
e un'altra da lungi render cenno,
tanto ch'a pena il potea l'occhio tòrre.

E io mi volsi al mar di tutto 'l senno;
dissi: "Questo che dice? e che risponde
quell'altro foco? e chi son quei che 'l fenno?".

Ed elli a me: "Su per le sucide onde
già scorgere puoi quello che s'aspetta,
se 'l fummo del pantan nol ti nasconde".

Corda non pinse mai da sé saetta
che sì corresse via per l'aere snella,
com'io vidi una nave piccioletta

venir per l'acqua verso noi in quella,
sotto 'l governo d'un sol galeoto,
che gridava: "Or se' giunta, anima fella!".

"Flegïàs, Flegïàs, tu gridi a vòto",
disse lo mio segnore, "a questa volta:
più non ci avrai che sol passando il loto".

Qual è colui che grande inganno ascolta
che li sia fatto, e poi se ne rammarca,
fecesi Flegïàs ne l'ira accolta.

Lo duca mio discese ne la barca,
e poi mi fece intrare appresso lui;
e sol quand'io fui dentro parve carca.

Tosto che 'l duca e io nel legno fui,
segando se ne va l'antica prora
de l'acqua più che non suol con altrui.

Mentre noi corravam la morta gora,
dinanzi mi si fece un pien di fango,
e disse: "Chi se' tu che vieni anzi ora?".

E io a lui: "S'i' vegno, non rimango;
ma tu chi se', che sì se' fatto brutto?".
Rispuose: "Vedi che son un che piango".

E io a lui: "Con piangere e con lutto,
spirito maladetto, ti rimani;
ch'i' ti conosco, ancor sie lordo tutto".

Allor distese al legno ambo le mani;
per che 'l maestro accorto lo sospinse,
dicendo: "Via costà con li altri cani!".

Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse;
basciommi 'l volto e disse: "Alma sdegnosa,
benedetta colei che 'n te s'incinse!

Quei fu al mondo persona orgogliosa;
bontà non è che sua memoria fregi:
così s'è l'ombra sua qui furïosa.

Quanti si tegnon or là sù gran regi
che qui staranno come porci in brago,
di sé lasciando orribili dispregi!".

E io: "Maestro, molto sarei vago
di vederlo attuffare in questa broda
prima che noi uscissimo del lago".

Ed elli a me: “Avante che la proda
ti si lasci veder, tu sarai sazio:
di tal disïo convien che tu goda”.

Dopo ciò poco vid’io quello strazio
far di costui a le fangose genti,
che Dio ancor ne lodo e ne ringrazio.

Tutti gridavano: “A Filippo Argenti!”;
e ‘l fiorentino spirito bizzarro
in sé medesmo si volvea co’ denti.

Quivi il lasciammo, che più non ne narro;
ma ne l’orecchie mi percosse un duolo,
per ch’io avante l’occhio intento sbarro.

Lo buon maestro disse: “Omai, figliuolo,
s’appressa la città c’ ha nome Dite,
coi gravi cittadin, col grande stuolo”.

E io: “Maestro, già le sue meschite
là entro certe ne la valle cerno,
vermiglie come se di foco uscite

fossero”. Ed ei mi disse: “Il foco etterno
ch’entro l’affoca le dimostra rosse,
come tu vedi in questo basso inferno”.

Noi pur giugnemmo dentro a l’alte fosse
che vallan quella terra sconsolata:
le mura mi parean che ferro fosse.

Non sanza prima far grande aggirata,
venimmo in parte dove il nocchier forte
“Usciteci”, gridò: “qui è l’intrata”.

Io vidi più di mille in su le porte
da ciel piovuti, che stizzosamente
dicean: “Chi è costui che senza morte

va per lo regno de la morta gente?”.
E ‘l savio mio maestro fece segno
di voler lor parlar segretamente.

Allor chiusero un poco il gran disdegno
e disser: “Vien tu solo, e quei sen vada
che sì ardito intrò per questo regno.

Sol si ritorni per la folle strada:
pruovi, se sa; ché tu qui rimarrai,
che li ha’ iscorta sì buia contrada”.

Pensa, lettor, se io mi sconfortai
nel suon de le parole maladette,
ché non credetti ritornarci mai.

“O caro duca mio, che più di sette
volte m’ hai sicurtà renduta e tratto
d’alto periglio che ‘ncontra mi stette,

non mi lasciar”, diss’io, “così disfatto;
e se ‘l passar più oltre ci è negato,
ritroviam l’orme nostre insieme ratto”.

E quel segnor che lì m’avea menato,
mi disse: “Non temer; ché ‘l nostro passo
non ci può tòrre alcun: da tal n’è dato.

Ma qui m’attendi, e lo spirito lasso
conforta e ciba di speranza buona,
ch’i’ non ti lascerò nel mondo basso”.

Così sen va, e quivi m’abbandona
lo dolce padre, e io rimagno in forse,
che sì e no nel capo mi tenciona.

Udir non potti quello ch’a lor porse;
ma ei non stette là con essi guari,
che ciascun dentro a pruova si ricorse.

Chiuser le porte que’ nostri avversari
nel petto al mio segnor, che fuor rimase
e rivolsesi a me con passi rari.

Li occhi a la terra e le ciglia avea rase
d’ogne baldanza, e dicea ne’ sospiri:
“Chi m’ ha negate le dolenti case!”.

E a me disse: “Tu, perch’io m’adiri,
non sbigottir, ch’io vincerò la prova,
qual ch’a la difension dentro s’aggiri.

Questa lor tracotanza non è nova;
ché già l’usaro a men segreta porta,
la qual sanza serrame ancor si trova.

Sovr’essa vedestù la scritta morta:
e già di qua da lei discende l’erta,
passando per li cerchi sanza scorta,

tal che per lui ne fia la terra aperta”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto nono

Canto nono, ove tratta e dimostra de la cittade c'ha nome Dite, la qual si è nel sesto cerchio de l'inferno e vedesi messa la qualità de le pene de li eretici; e dichiara in questo canto Virgilio a Dante una questione, e rendelo sicuro dicendo sé esservi stato dentro altra fiata.

Quel color che viltà di fuor mi pinse
veggendo il duca mio tornare in volta,
più tosto dentro il suo novo ristrinse.

Attento si fermò com'uom ch'ascolta;
ché l'occhio nol potea menare a lunga
per l'aere nero e per la nebbia folta.

"Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga",
cominciò el, "se non ... Tal ne s'offerse.
Oh quanto tarda a me ch'altri qui giunga!".

I' vidi ben sì com'ei ricoperse
lo cominciar con l'altro che poi venne,
che fur parole a le prime diverse;

ma nondimen paura il suo dir dienne,
perch'io traeva la parola tronca
forse a peggior sentenzia che non tenne.

"In questo fondo de la trista conca
discende mai alcun del primo grado,
che sol per pena ha la speranza cionca?".

Questa question fec'io; e quei "Di rado
incontra", mi rispuose, "che di noi
faccia il cammino alcun per qual io vado.

Ver è ch'altra fïata qua giù fui,
congiurato da quella Eritón cruda
che richiamava l'ombre a' corpi sui.

Di poco era di me la carne nuda,
ch’ella mi fece intrar dentr’a quel muro,
per trarne un spirto del cerchio di Giuda.

Quell’è ‘l più basso loco e ‘l più oscuro,
e ‘l più lontan dal ciel che tutto gira:
ben so ‘l cammin; però ti fa sicuro.

Questa palude che ‘l gran puzzo spira
cigne dintorno la città dolente,
u’ non potemo intrare omai sanz’ira”.

E altro disse, ma non l’ ho a mente;
però che l’occhio m’avea tutto tratto
ver’ l’alta torre a la cima rovente,

dove in un punto furon dritte ratto
tre furïe infernal di sangue tinte,
che membra feminine avieno e atto,

e con idre verdissime eran cinte;
serpentelli e ceraste avien per crine,
onde le fiere tempie erano avvinte.

E quei, che ben conobbe le meschine
de la regina de l’etterno pianto,
“Guarda”, mi disse, “le feroci Erine.

Quest’è Megera dal sinistro canto;
quella che piange dal destro è Aletto;
Tesifón è nel mezzo”; e tacque a tanto.

Con l’unghie si fendea ciascuna il petto;
battiensi a palme e gridavan sì alto,
ch’i’ mi strinsi al poeta per sospetto.

“Vegna Medusa: sì ‘l farem di smalto”,
dicevan tutte riguardando in giuso;
“mal non vengiammo in Tesëo l’assalto”.

“Volgiti ‘n dietro e tien lo viso chiuso;
ché se ‘l Gorgón si mostra e tu ‘l vedessi,
nulla sarebbe di tornar mai suso”. 57

Così disse ‘l maestro; ed elli stessi
mi volse, e non si tenne a le mie mani,
che con le sue ancor non mi chiudessi. 60

O voi ch’avete li ‘ntelletti sani,
mirate la dottrina che s’asconde
sotto ‘l velame de li versi strani. 63

E già venìa su per le torbide onde
un fracasso d’un suon, pien di spavento,
per cui tremavano amendue le sponde, 66

non altrimenti fatto che d’un vento
impetüoso per li avversi ardori,
che fier la selva e sanz’alcun rattento 69

li rami schianta, abbatte e porta fori;
dinanzi polveroso va superbo,
e fa fuggir le fiere e li pastori. 72

Li occhi mi sciolse e disse: “Or drizza il nerbo
del viso su per quella schiuma antica
per indi ove quel fummo è più acerbo”. 75

Come le rane innanzi a la nimica
biscia per l’acqua si dileguan tutte,
fin ch’a la terra ciascuna s’abbica, 78

vid’io più di mille anime distrutte
fuggir così dinanzi ad un ch’al passo
passava Stige con le piante asciutte. 81

Dal volto rimovea quell’aere grasso,
menando la sinistra innanzi spesso;
e sol di quell’angoscia parea lasso. 84

Ben m’accorsi ch’elli era da ciel messo,
e volsimi al maestro; e quei fé segno
ch’i’ stessi queto ed inchinassi ad esso.

Ahi quanto mi parea pien di disdegno!
Venne a la porta e con una verghetta
l’aperse, che non v’ebbe alcun ritegno.

“O cacciati del ciel, gente dispetta”,
cominciò elli in su l’orribil soglia,
“ond’esta oltracotanza in voi s’alletta?

Perché recalcitrate a quella voglia
a cui non puote il fin mai esser mozzo,
e che più volte v’ ha cresciuta doglia?

Che giova ne le fata dar di cozzo?
Cerbero vostro, se ben vi ricorda,
ne porta ancor pelato il mento e ‘l gozzo”.

Poi si rivolse per la strada lorda,
e non fé motto a noi, ma fé sembiante
d’omo cui altra cura stringa e morda

che quella di colui che li è davante;
e noi movemmo i piedi inver’ la terra,
sicuri appresso le parole sante.

Dentro li ‘ntrammo sanz’alcuna guerra;
e io, ch’avea di riguardar disio
la condizion che tal fortezza serra,

com’io fui dentro, l’occhio intorno invio:
e veggio ad ogne man grande campagna,
piena di duolo e di tormento rio.

Sì come ad Arli, ove Rodano stagna,
sì com’a Pola, presso del Carnaro
ch’Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna,

fanno i sepulcri tutt’il loco varo,
così facevan quivi d’ogne parte,
salvo che ‘l modo v’era più amaro;

ché tra li avelli fiamme erano sparte,
per le quali eran sì del tutto accesi,
che ferro più non chiede verun’arte.

Tutti li lor coperchi eran sospesi,
e fuor n’uscivan sì duri lamenti,
che ben parean di miseri e d’offesi.

E io: “Maestro, quai son quelle genti
che, seppellite dentro da quell’arche,
si fan sentir coi sospiri dolenti?”.

E quelli a me: “Qui son li eresïarche
con lor seguaci, d’ogne setta, e molto
più che non credi son le tombe carche.

Simile qui con simile è sepolto,
e i monimenti son più e men caldi”.
E poi ch’a la man destra si fu vòlto,

passammo tra i martìri e li alti spaldi.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto decimo

Canto decimo, ove tratta del sesto cerchio de l'inferno e de la pena de li eretici, e in forma d'indovinare in persona di messer Farinata predice molte cose e di quelle che avvennero a Dante, e solve una questione.

Ora sen va per un secreto calle,
tra 'l muro de la terra e li martìri,
lo mio maestro, e io dopo le spalle.

"O virtù somma, che per li empi giri
mi volvi", cominciai, "com'a te piace,
parlami, e sodisfammi a' miei disiri.

La gente che per li sepolcri giace
potrebbesi veder? già son levati
tutt'i coperchi, e nessun guardia face".

E quelli a me: "Tutti saran serrati
quando di Iosafàt qui torneranno
coi corpi che là sù hanno lasciati.

Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno
con Epicuro tutti suoi seguaci,
che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.

Però a la dimanda che mi faci
quinc'entro satisfatto sarà tosto,
e al disio ancor che tu mi taci".

E io: "Buon duca, non tegno riposto
a te mio cuor se non per dicer poco,
e tu m' hai non pur mo a ciò disposto".

"O Tosco che per la città del foco
vivo ten vai così parlando onesto,
piacciati di restare in questo loco.

La tua loquela ti fa manifesto
di quella nobil patrïa natio,
a la qual forse fui troppo molesto”.

Subitamente questo suono uscìo
d’una de l’arche; però m’accostai,
temendo, un poco più al duca mio.

Ed el mi disse: “Volgiti! Che fai?
Vedi là Farinata che s’è dritto:
da la cintola in sù tutto ‘l vedrai”.

Io avea già il mio viso nel suo fitto;
ed el s’ergea col petto e con la fronte
com’avesse l’inferno a gran dispitto.

E l’animose man del duca e pronte
mi pinser tra le sepulture a lui,
dicendo: “Le parole tue sien conte”.

Com’io al piè de la sua tomba fui,
guardommi un poco, e poi, quasi sdegnoso,
mi dimandò: “Chi fuor li maggior tui?”.

Io ch’era d’ubidir disideroso,
non gliel celai, ma tutto gliel’apersi;
ond’ei levò le ciglia un poco in suso;

poi disse: “Fieramente furo avversi
a me e a miei primi e a mia parte,
sì che per due fïate li dispersi”.

“S’ei fur cacciati, ei tornar d’ogne parte”,
rispuos’io lui, “l’una e l’altra fïata;
ma i vostri non appreser ben quell’arte”.

Allor surse a la vista scoperchiata
un’ombra, lungo questa, infino al mento:
credo che s’era in ginocchie levata.

Dintorno mi guardò, come talento
avesse di veder s’altri era meco;
e poi che ‘l sospecciar fu tutto spento,

piangendo disse: “Se per questo cieco
carcere vai per altezza d’ingegno,
mio figlio ov’è? e perché non è teco?”.

E io a lui: “Da me stesso non vegno:
colui ch’attende là, per qui mi mena
forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno”.

Le sue parole e ‘l modo de la pena
m’avean di costui già letto il nome;
però fu la risposta così piena.

Di sùbito drizzato gridò: “Come?
dicesti “elli ebbe”? non viv’elli ancora?
non fiere li occhi suoi lo dolce lume?”.

Quando s’accorse d’alcuna dimora
ch’io facëa dinanzi a la risposta,
supin ricadde e più non parve fora.

Ma quell’altro magnanimo, a cui posta
restato m’era, non mutò aspetto,
né mosse collo, né piegò sua costa;

e sé continüando al primo detto,
“S’elli han quell’arte”, disse, “male appresa,
ciò mi tormenta più che questo letto.

Ma non cinquanta volte fia raccesa
la faccia de la donna che qui regge,
che tu saprai quanto quell’arte pesa.

E se tu mai nel dolce mondo regge,
dimmi: perché quel popolo è sì empio
incontr’a’ miei in ciascuna sua legge?”.

Ond’io a lui: “Lo strazio e ‘l grande scempio
che fece l’Arbia colorata in rosso,
tal orazion fa far nel nostro tempio”.

Poi ch’ebbe sospirando il capo mosso,
“A ciò non fu’ io sol”, disse, “né certo
sanza cagion con li altri sarei mosso.

Ma fu’ io solo, là dove sofferto
fu per ciascun di tòrre via Fiorenza,
colui che la difesi a viso aperto”.

“Deh, se riposi mai vostra semenza”,
prega’ io lui, “solvetemi quel nodo
che qui ha ‘nviluppata mia sentenza.

El par che voi veggiate, se ben odo,
dinanzi quel che ‘l tempo seco adduce,
e nel presente tenete altro modo”.

“Noi veggiam, come quei c’ ha mala luce,
le cose”, disse, “che ne son lontano;
cotanto ancor ne splende il sommo duce.

Quando s’appressano o son, tutto è vano
nostro intelletto; e s’altri non ci apporta,
nulla sapem di vostro stato umano.

Però comprender puoi che tutta morta
fia nostra conoscenza da quel punto
che del futuro fia chiusa la porta”.

Allor, come di mia colpa compunto,
dissi: “Or direte dunque a quel caduto
che ‘l suo nato è co’ vivi ancor congiunto;

e s’i’ fui, dianzi, a la risposta muto,
fate i saper che ‘l fei perché pensava
già ne l’error che m’avete soluto”.

E già ‘l maestro mio mi richiamava;
per ch’i’ pregai lo spirto più avaccio
che mi dicesse chi con lu’ istava.

Dissemi: “Qui con più di mille giaccio:
qua dentro è ‘l secondo Federico
e ‘l Cardinale; e de li altri mi taccio”.

Indi s’ascose; e io inver’ l’antico
poeta volsi i passi, ripensando
a quel parlar che mi parea nemico.

Elli si mosse; e poi, così andando,
mi disse: “Perché se’ tu sì smarrito?”.
E io li sodisfeci al suo dimando.

“La mente tua conservi quel ch’udito
hai contra te”, mi comandò quel saggio;
“e ora attendi qui”, e drizzò ‘l dito:

“quando sarai dinanzi al dolce raggio
di quella il cui bell’occhio tutto vede,
da lei saprai di tua vita il vïaggio”.

Appresso mosse a man sinistra il piede:
lasciammo il muro e gimmo inver’ lo mezzo
per un sentier ch’a una valle fiede,

che ‘nfin là sù facea spiacer suo lezzo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto undicesimo

Canto undecimo, nel quale tratta de' tre cerchi disotto d'inferno, e distingue de le genti che dentro vi sono punite, e che quivi più che altrove; e solve una questione.

In su l'estremità d'un'alta ripa
che facevan gran pietre rotte in cerchio,
venimmo sopra più crudele stipa;

e quivi, per l'orribile soperchio
del puzzo che 'l profondo abisso gitta,
ci raccostammo, in dietro, ad un coperchio

d'un grand'avello, ov'io vidi una scritta
che dicea: 'Anastasio papa guardo,
lo qual trasse Fotin de la via dritta'.

"Lo nostro scender conviene esser tardo,
sì che s'ausi un poco in prima il senso
al tristo fiato; e poi no i fia riguardo".

Così 'l maestro; e io "Alcun compenso",
dissi lui, "trova che 'l tempo non passi
perduto". Ed elli: "Vedi ch'a ciò penso".

"Figliuol mio, dentro da cotesti sassi",
cominciò poi a dir, "son tre cerchietti
di grado in grado, come que' che lassi.

Tutti son pien di spirti maladetti;
ma perché poi ti basti pur la vista,
intendi come e perché son costretti.

D'ogne malizia, ch'odio in cielo acquista,
ingiuria è 'l fine, ed ogne fin cotale
o con forza o con frode altrui contrista.

Ma perché frode è de l’uom proprio male,
più spiace a Dio; e però stan di sotto
li frodolenti, e più dolor li assale. 27

Di vïolenti il primo cerchio è tutto;
ma perché si fa forza a tre persone,
in tre gironi è distinto e costrutto. 30

A Dio, a sé, al prossimo si pòne
far forza, dico in loro e in lor cose,
come udirai con aperta ragione. 33

Morte per forza e ferute dogliose
nel prossimo si danno, e nel suo avere
ruine, incendi e tollette dannose; 36

onde omicide e ciascun che mal fiere,
guastatori e predon, tutti tormenta
lo giron primo per diverse schiere. 39

Puote omo avere in sé man vïolenta
e ne’ suoi beni; e però nel secondo
giron convien che sanza pro si penta 42

qualunque priva sé del vostro mondo,
biscazza e fonde la sua facultade,
e piange là dov’esser de’ giocondo. 45

Puossi far forza ne la deïtade,
col cor negando e bestemmiando quella,
e spregiando natura e sua bontade; 48

e però lo minor giron suggella
del segno suo e Soddoma e Caorsa
e chi, spregiando Dio col cor, favella. 51

La frode, ond’ogne coscïenza è morsa,
può l’omo usare in colui che ‘n lui fida
e in quel che fidanza non imborsa. 54

Questo modo di retro par ch’incida
pur lo vinco d’amor che fa natura;
onde nel cerchio secondo s’annida

ipocresia, lusinghe e chi affattura,
falsità, ladroneccio e simonia,
ruffian, baratti e simile lordura.

Per l’altro modo quell’amor s’oblia
che fa natura, e quel ch’è poi aggiunto,
di che la fede spezïal si cria;

onde nel cerchio minore, ov’è ‘l punto
de l’universo in su che Dite siede,
qualunque trade in etterno è consunto”.

E io: “Maestro, assai chiara procede
la tua ragione, e assai ben distingue
questo baràtro e ‘l popol ch’e’ possiede.

Ma dimmi: quei de la palude pingue,
che mena il vento, e che batte la pioggia,
e che s’incontran con sì aspre lingue,

perché non dentro da la città roggia
sono ei puniti, se Dio li ha in ira?
e se non li ha, perché sono a tal foggia?”.

Ed elli a me “Perché tanto delira”,
disse, “lo ‘ngegno tuo da quel che sòle?
o ver la mente dove altrove mira?

Non ti rimembra di quelle parole
con le quai la tua Etica pertratta
le tre disposizion che ‘l ciel non vole,

incontenenza, malizia e la matta
bestialitade? e come incontenenza
men Dio offende e men biasimo accatta?

Se tu riguardi ben questa sentenza,
e rechiti a la mente chi son quelli
che sù di fuor sostegnon penitenza,

tu vedrai ben perché da questi felli
sien dipartiti, e perché men crucciata
la divina vendetta li martelli”.

“O sol che sani ogne vista turbata,
tu mi contenti sì quando tu solvi,
che, non men che saver, dubbiar m’aggrata.

Ancora in dietro un poco ti rivolvi”,
diss’io, “là dove di’ ch’usura offende
la divina bontade, e ‘l groppo solvi”.

“Filosofia”, mi disse, “a chi la ‘ntende,
nota, non pure in una sola parte,
come natura lo suo corso prende

dal divino ‘ntelletto e da sua arte;
e se tu ben la tua Fisica note,
tu troverai, non dopo molte carte,

che l’arte vostra quella, quanto pote,
segue, come ‘l maestro fa ‘l discente;
sì che vostr’arte a Dio quasi è nepote.

Da queste due, se tu ti rechi a mente
lo Genesì dal principio, convene
prender sua vita e avanzar la gente;

e perché l’usuriere altra via tene,
per sé natura e per la sua seguace
dispregia, poi ch’in altro pon la spene.

Ma seguimi oramai che ‘l gir mi piace;
ché i Pesci guizzan su per l’orizzonta,
e ‘l Carro tutto sovra ‘l Coro giace,

e ‘l balzo via là oltra si dismonta”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto dodicesimo

Canto XII, ove tratta del discendimento nel settimo cerchio d'inferno, e de le pene di quelli che fecero forza in persona de' tiranni, e qui tratta di Minotauro e del fiume del sangue, e come per uno centauro furono scorti e guidati sicuri oltre il fiume.

Era lo loco ov'a scender la riva
venimmo, alpestro e, per quel che v'er'anco,
tal, ch'ogne vista ne sarebbe schiva.

Qual è quella ruina che nel fianco
di qua da Trento l'Adice percosse,
o per tremoto o per sostegno manco,

che da cima del monte, onde si mosse,
al piano è sì la roccia discoscesa,
ch'alcuna via darebbe a chi sù fosse:

cotal di quel burrato era la scesa;
e 'n su la punta de la rotta lacca
l'infamïa di Creti era distesa

che fu concetta ne la falsa vacca;
e quando vide noi, sé stesso morse,
sì come quei cui l'ira dentro fiacca.

Lo savio mio inver' lui gridò: "Forse
tu credi che qui sia 'l duca d'Atene,
che sù nel mondo la morte ti porse?

Pàrtiti, bestia, ché questi non vene
ammaestrato da la tua sorella,
ma vassi per veder le vostre pene".

Qual è quel toro che si slaccia in quella
c' ha ricevuto già 'l colpo mortale,
che gir non sa, ma qua e là saltella,

vid’io lo Minotauro far cotale;
e quello accorto gridò: “Corri al varco;
mentre ch’e’ ‘nfuria, è buon che tu ti cale”.

Così prendemmo via giù per lo scarco
di quelle pietre, che spesso moviensi
sotto i miei piedi per lo novo carco.

Io gia pensando; e quei disse: “Tu pensi
forse a questa ruina, ch’è guardata
da quell’ira bestial ch’i’ ora spensi.

Or vo’ che sappi che l’altra fïata
ch’i’ discesi qua giù nel basso inferno,
questa roccia non era ancor cascata.

Ma certo poco pria, se ben discerno,
che venisse colui che la gran preda
levò a Dite del cerchio superno,

da tutte parti l’alta valle feda
tremò sì, ch’i’ pensai che l’universo
sentisse amor, per lo qual è chi creda

più volte il mondo in caòsso converso;
e in quel punto questa vecchia roccia,
qui e altrove, tal fece riverso.

Ma ficca li occhi a valle, ché s’approccia
la riviera del sangue in la qual bolle
qual che per vïolenza in altrui noccia”.

Oh cieca cupidigia e ira folle,
che sì ci sproni ne la vita corta,
e ne l’etterna poi sì mal c’immolle!

Io vidi un’ampia fossa in arco torta,
come quella che tutto ‘l piano abbraccia,
secondo ch’avea detto la mia scorta;

e tra ‘l piè de la ripa ed essa, in traccia
corrien centauri, armati di saette,
come solien nel mondo andare a caccia.

Veggendoci calar, ciascun ristette,
e de la schiera tre si dipartiro
con archi e asticciuole prima elette;

e l’un gridò da lungi: “A qual martiro
venite voi che scendete la costa?
Ditel costinci; se non, l’arco tiro”.

Lo mio maestro disse: “La risposta
farem noi a Chirón costà di presso:
mal fu la voglia tua sempre sì tosta”.

Poi mi tentò, e disse: “Quelli è Nesso,
che morì per la bella Deianira,
e fé di sé la vendetta elli stesso.

E quel di mezzo, ch’al petto si mira,
è il gran Chirón, il qual nodrì Achille;
quell’altro è Folo, che fu sì pien d’ira.

Dintorno al fosso vanno a mille a mille,
saettando qual anima si svelle
del sangue più che sua colpa sortille”.

Noi ci appressammo a quelle fiere isnelle:
Chirón prese uno strale, e con la cocca
fece la barba in dietro a le mascelle.

Quando s’ebbe scoperta la gran bocca,
disse a’ compagni: “Siete voi accorti
che quel di retro move ciò ch’el tocca?

Così non soglion far li piè d’i morti”.
E ‘l mio buon duca, che già li er’al petto,
dove le due nature son consorti,

rispuose: “Ben è vivo, e sì soletto
mostrar li mi convien la valle buia;
necessità ‘l ci ‘nduce, e non diletto.

Tal si partì da cantare alleluia
che mi commise quest’officio novo:
non è ladron, né io anima fuia.

Ma per quella virtù per cu’ io movo
li passi miei per sì selvaggia strada,
danne un de’ tuoi, a cui noi siamo a provo,

e che ne mostri là dove si guada,
e che porti costui in su la groppa,
ché non è spirto che per l’aere vada”.

Chirón si volse in su la destra poppa,
e disse a Nesso: “Torna, e sì li guida,
e fa cansar s’altra schiera v’intoppa”.

Or ci movemmo con la scorta fida
lungo la proda del bollor vermiglio,
dove i bolliti facieno alte strida.

Io vidi gente sotto infino al ciglio;
e ‘l gran centauro disse: “E’ son tiranni
che dier nel sangue e ne l’aver di piglio.

Quivi si piangon li spietati danni;
quivi è Alessandro, e Dïonisio fero
che fé Cicilia aver dolorosi anni.

E quella fronte c’ ha ‘l pel così nero,
è Azzolino; e quell’altro ch’è biondo,
è Opizzo da Esti, il qual per vero

fu spento dal figliastro sù nel mondo”.
Allor mi volsi al poeta, e quei disse:
“Questi ti sia or primo, e io secondo”.

Poco più oltre il centauro s’affisse
sovr’una gente che ‘nfino a la gola
parea che di quel bulicame uscisse.

Mostrocci un’ombra da l’un canto sola,
dicendo: “Colui fesse in grembo a Dio
lo cor che ‘n su Tamisi ancor si cola”.

Poi vidi gente che di fuor del rio
tenean la testa e ancor tutto ‘l casso;
e di costoro assai riconobb’io.

Così a più a più si facea basso
quel sangue, sì che cocea pur li piedi;
e quindi fu del fosso il nostro passo.

“Sì come tu da questa parte vedi
lo bulicame che sempre si scema”,
disse ‘l centauro, “voglio che tu credi

che da quest’altra a più a più giù prema
lo fondo suo, infin ch’el si raggiunge
ove la tirannia convien che gema.

La divina giustizia di qua punge
quell’Attila che fu flagello in terra,
e Pirro e Sesto; e in etterno munge

le lagrime, che col bollor diserra,
a Rinier da Corneto, a Rinier Pazzo,
che fecero a le strade tanta guerra”.

Poi si rivolse e ripassossi ‘l guazzo.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto tredicesimo

Canto XIII, ove tratta de l'esenzia del secondo girone ch'è nel settimo circulo, dove punisce coloro ch'ebbero contra sé medesimi violenta mano, ovvero non uccidendo sé ma guastando i loro beni.

Non era ancor di là Nesso arrivato,
quando noi ci mettemmo per un bosco
che da neun sentiero era segnato.

Non fronda verde, ma di color fosco;
non rami schietti, ma nodosi e 'nvolti;
non pomi v'eran, ma stecchi con tòsco.

Non han sì aspri sterpi né sì folti
quelle fiere selvagge che 'n odio hanno
tra Cecina e Corneto i luoghi cólti.

Quivi le brutte Arpie lor nidi fanno,
che cacciar de le Strofade i Troiani
con tristo annunzio di futuro danno.

Ali hanno late, e colli e visi umani,
piè con artigli, e pennuto 'l gran ventre;
fanno lamenti in su li alberi strani.

E 'l buon maestro "Prima che più entre,
sappi che se' nel secondo girone",
mi cominciò a dire, "e sarai mentre

che tu verrai ne l'orribil sabbione.
Però riguarda ben; sì vederai
cose che torrien fede al mio sermone".

Io sentia d'ogne parte trarre guai
e non vedea persona che 'l facesse;
per ch'io tutto smarrito m'arrestai.

Cred’ïo ch’ei credette ch’io credesse
che tante voci uscisser, tra quei bronchi,
da gente che per noi si nascondesse.

Però disse ‘l maestro: “Se tu tronchi
qualche fraschetta d’una d’este piante,
li pensier c’ hai si faran tutti monchi”.

Allor porsi la mano un poco avante
e colsi un ramicel da un gran pruno;
e ‘l tronco suo gridò: “Perché mi schiante?”.

Da che fatto fu poi di sangue bruno,
ricominciò a dir: “Perché mi scerpi?
non hai tu spirto di pietade alcuno?

Uomini fummo, e or siam fatti sterpi:
ben dovrebb’esser la tua man più pia,
se state fossimo anime di serpi”.

Come d’un stizzo verde ch’arso sia
da l’un de’ capi, che da l’altro geme
e cigola per vento che va via,

sì de la scheggia rotta usciva insieme
parole e sangue; ond’io lasciai la cima
cadere, e stetti come l’uom che teme.

“S’elli avesse potuto creder prima”,
rispuose ‘l savio mio, “anima lesa,
ciò c’ ha veduto pur con la mia rima,

non averebbe in te la man distesa;
ma la cosa incredibile mi fece
indurlo ad ovra ch’a me stesso pesa.

Ma dilli chi tu fosti, sì che ‘n vece
d’alcun’ammenda tua fama rinfreschi
nel mondo sù, dove tornar li lece”.

E ‘l tronco: “Sì col dolce dir m’adeschi,
ch’i’ non posso tacere; e voi non gravi
perch’ïo un poco a ragionar m’inveschi.

Io son colui che tenni ambo le chiavi
del cor di Federigo, e che le volsi,
serrando e diserrando, sì soavi,

che dal secreto suo quasi ogn’uom tolsi;
fede portai al glorïoso offizio,
tanto ch’i’ ne perde’ li sonni e ‘ polsi.

La meretrice che mai da l’ospizio
di Cesare non torse li occhi putti,
morte comune e de le corti vizio,

infiammò contra me li animi tutti;
e li ‘nfiammati infiammar sì Augusto,
che ‘ lieti onor tornaro in tristi lutti.

L’animo mio, per disdegnoso gusto,
credendo col morir fuggir disdegno,
ingiusto fece me contra me giusto.

Per le nove radici d’esto legno
vi giuro che già mai non ruppi fede
al mio segnor, che fu d’onor sì degno.

E se di voi alcun nel mondo riede,
conforti la memoria mia, che giace
ancor del colpo che ‘nvidia le diede”.

Un poco attese, e poi “Da ch’el si tace”,
disse ‘l poeta a me, “non perder l’ora;
ma parla, e chiedi a lui, se più ti piace”.

Ond’ïo a lui: “Domandal tu ancora
di quel che credi ch’a me satisfaccia;
ch’i’ non potrei, tanta pietà m’accora”.

Perciò ricominciò: “Se l’om ti faccia
liberamente ciò che ‘l tuo dir priega,
spirito incarcerato, ancor ti piaccia

di dirne come l’anima si lega
in questi nocchi; e dinne, se tu puoi,
s’alcuna mai di tai membra si spiega”.

Allor soffiò il tronco forte, e poi
si convertì quel vento in cotal voce:
“Brievemente sarà risposto a voi.

Quando si parte l’anima feroce
dal corpo ond’ella stessa s’è disvelta,
Minòs la manda a la settima foce.

Cade in la selva, e non l’è parte scelta;
ma là dove fortuna la balestra,
quivi germoglia come gran di spelta.

Surge in vermena e in pianta silvestra:
l’Arpie, pascendo poi de le sue foglie,
fanno dolore, e al dolor fenestra.

Come l’altre verrem per nostre spoglie,
ma non però ch’alcuna sen rivesta,
ché non è giusto aver ciò ch’om si toglie.

Qui le strascineremo, e per la mesta
selva saranno i nostri corpi appesi,
ciascuno al prun de l’ombra sua molesta”.

Noi eravamo ancora al tronco attesi,
credendo ch’altro ne volesse dire,
quando noi fummo d’un romor sorpresi,

similemente a colui che venire
sente ‘l porco e la caccia a la sua posta,
ch’ode le bestie, e le frasche stormire.

Ed ecco due da la sinistra costa,
nudi e graffiati, fuggendo sì forte,
che de la selva rompieno ogne rosta.

Quel dinanzi: “Or accorri, accorri, morte!”.
E l’altro, cui pareva tardar troppo,
gridava: “Lano, sì non furo accorte

le gambe tue a le giostre dal Toppo!”.
E poi che forse li fallia la lena,
di sé e d’un cespuglio fece un groppo.

Di rietro a loro era la selva piena
di nere cagne, bramose e correnti
come veltri ch’uscisser di catena.

In quel che s’appiattò miser li denti,
e quel dilaceraro a brano a brano;
poi sen portar quelle membra dolenti.

Presemi allor la mia scorta per mano,
e menommi al cespuglio che piangea
per le rotture sanguinenti in vano.

“O Iacopo”, dicea, “da Santo Andrea,
che t’è giovato di me fare schermo?
che colpa ho io de la tua vita rea?”.

Quando ‘l maestro fu sovr’esso fermo,
disse: “Chi fosti, che per tante punte
soffi con sangue doloroso sermo?”.

Ed elli a noi: “O anime che giunte
siete a veder lo strazio disonesto
c’ ha le mie fronde sì da me disgiunte,

raccoglietele al piè del tristo cesto.
I’ fui de la città che nel Batista
mutò ‘l primo padrone; ond’ei per questo

sempre con l’arte sua la farà trista;
e se non fosse che ‘n sul passo d’Arno
rimane ancor di lui alcuna vista,

que’ cittadin che poi la rifondarno
sovra ‘l cener che d’Attila rimase,
avrebber fatto lavorare indarno.

Io fei gibetto a me de le mie case”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quattordicesimo

Canto XIV, ove tratta de la qualità del terzo girone, contento nel settimo circulo; e quivi si puniscono coloro che fanno forza ne la deitade, negando e bestemmiando quella; e nomina qui spezialmente il re Capaneo scelleratissimo in questo preditto peccato.

Poi che la carità del natio loco
mi strinse, raunai le fronde sparte
e rende' le a colui, ch'era già fioco.

Indi venimmo al fine ove si parte
lo secondo giron dal terzo, e dove
si vede di giustizia orribil arte.

A ben manifestar le cose nove,
dico che arrivammo ad una landa
che dal suo letto ogne pianta rimove.

La dolorosa selva l'è ghirlanda
intorno, come 'l fosso tristo ad essa;
quivi fermammo i passi a randa a randa.

Lo spazzo era una rena arida e spessa,
non d'altra foggia fatta che colei
che fu da' piè di Caton già soppressa.

O vendetta di Dio, quanto tu dei
esser temuta da ciascun che legge
ciò che fu manifesto a li occhi mei!

D'anime nude vidi molte gregge
che piangean tutte assai miseramente,
e parea posta lor diversa legge.

Supin giacea in terra alcuna gente,
alcuna si sedea tutta raccolta,
e altra andava continüamente.

Quella che giva ‘ntorno era più molta,
e quella men che giacëa al tormento,
ma più al duolo avea la lingua sciolta.

Sovra tutto ‘l sabbion, d’un cader lento,
piovean di foco dilatate falde,
come di neve in alpe sanza vento.

Quali Alessandro in quelle parti calde
d’Indïa vide sopra ‘l süo stuolo
fiamme cadere infino a terra salde,

per ch’ei provide a scalpitar lo suolo
con le sue schiere, acciò che lo vapore
mei si stingueva mentre ch’era solo:

tale scendeva l’etternale ardore;
onde la rena s’accendea, com’esca
sotto focile, a doppiar lo dolore.

Sanza riposo mai era la tresca
de le misere mani, or quindi or quinci
escotendo da sé l’arsura fresca.

I’ cominciai: “Maestro, tu che vinci
tutte le cose, fuor che ‘ demon duri
ch’a l’intrar de la porta incontra uscinci,

chi è quel grande che non par che curi
lo ‘ncendio e giace dispettoso e torto,
sì che la pioggia non par che ‘l marturi?”.

E quel medesmo, che si fu accorto
ch’io domandava il mio duca di lui,
gridò: “Qual io fui vivo, tal son morto.

Se Giove stanchi ‘l suo fabbro da cui
crucciato prese la folgore aguta
onde l’ultimo dì percosso fui;

o s’elli stanchi li altri a muta a muta
in Mongibello a la focina negra,
chiamando “Buon Vulcano, aiuta, aiuta!”, 57

sì com’el fece a la pugna di Flegra,
e me saetti con tutta sua forza:
non ne potrebbe aver vendetta allegra”. 60

Allora il duca mio parlò di forza
tanto, ch’i’ non l’avea sì forte udito:
“O Capaneo, in ciò che non s’ammorza 63

la tua superbia, se’ tu più punito;
nullo martiro, fuor che la tua rabbia,
sarebbe al tuo furor dolor compito”. 66

Poi si rivolse a me con miglior labbia,
dicendo: “Quei fu l’un d’i sette regi
ch’assiser Tebe; ed ebbe e par ch’elli abbia 69

Dio in disdegno, e poco par che ‘l pregi;
ma, com’io dissi lui, li suoi dispetti
sono al suo petto assai debiti fregi. 72

Or mi vien dietro, e guarda che non metti,
ancor, li piedi ne la rena arsiccia;
ma sempre al bosco tien li piedi stretti”. 75

Tacendo divenimmo là ‘ve spiccia
fuor de la selva un picciol fiumicello,
lo cui rossore ancor mi raccapriccia. 78

Quale del Bulicame esce ruscello
che parton poi tra lor le peccatrici,
tal per la rena giù sen giva quello. 81

Lo fondo suo e ambo le pendici
fatt’era ‘n pietra, e ‘ margini dallato;
per ch’io m’accorsi che ‘l passo era lici. 84

“Tra tutto l’altro ch’i’ t’ ho dimostrato,
poscia che noi intrammo per la porta
lo cui sogliare a nessuno è negato,

cosa non fu da li tuoi occhi scorta
notabile com’è ‘l presente rio,
che sovra sé tutte fiammelle ammorta”.

Queste parole fuor del duca mio;
per ch’io ‘l pregai che mi largisse ‘l pasto
di cui largito m’avëa il disio.

“In mezzo mar siede un paese guasto”,
diss’elli allora, “che s’appella Creta,
sotto ‘l cui rege fu già ‘l mondo casto.

Una montagna v’è che già fu lieta
d’acqua e di fronde, che si chiamò Ida;
or è diserta come cosa vieta.

Rëa la scelse già per cuna fida
del suo figliuolo, e per celarlo meglio,
quando piangea, vi facea far le grida.

Dentro dal monte sta dritto un gran veglio,
che tien volte le spalle inver’ Dammiata
e Roma guarda come süo speglio.

La sua testa è di fin oro formata,
e puro argento son le braccia e ‘l petto,
poi è di rame infino a la forcata;

da indi in giuso è tutto ferro eletto,
salvo che ‘l destro piede è terra cotta;
e sta ‘n su quel, più che ‘n su l’altro, eretto.

Ciascuna parte, fuor che l’oro, è rotta
d’una fessura che lagrime goccia,
le quali, accolte, fóran quella grotta.

Lor corso in questa valle si diroccia;
fanno Acheronte, Stige e Flegetonta;
poi sen van giù per questa stretta doccia,

infin, là ove più non si dismonta,
fanno Cocito; e qual sia quello stagno
tu lo vedrai, però qui non si conta”.

E io a lui: “Se ‘l presente rigagno
si diriva così dal nostro mondo,
perché ci appar pur a questo vivagno?”.

Ed elli a me: “Tu sai che ‘l loco è tondo;
e tutto che tu sie venuto molto,
pur a sinistra, giù calando al fondo,

non se’ ancor per tutto ‘l cerchio vòlto;
per che, se cosa n’apparisce nova,
non de’ addur maraviglia al tuo volto”.

E io ancor: “Maestro, ove si trova
Flegetonta e Letè? ché de l’un taci,
e l’altro di’ che si fa d’esta piova”.

“In tutte tue question certo mi piaci”,
rispuose, “ma ‘l bollor de l’acqua rossa
dovea ben solver l’una che tu faci.

Letè vedrai, ma fuor di questa fossa,
là dove vanno l’anime a lavarsi
quando la colpa pentuta è rimossa”.

Poi disse: “Omai è tempo da scostarsi
dal bosco; fa che di retro a me vegne:
li margini fan via, che non son arsi,

e sopra loro ogne vapor si spegne”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quindicesimo

Canto XV, ove tratta di quello medesimo girone e di quello medesimo cerchio; e qui sono puniti coloro che fanno forza ne la deitade, spregiando natura e sua bontade, sì come sono li soddomiti.

Ora cen porta l'un de' duri margini;
e 'l fummo del ruscel di sopra aduggia,
sì che dal foco salva l'acqua e li argini.

Quali Fiamminghi tra Guizzante e Bruggia,
temendo 'l fiotto che 'nver' lor s'avventa,
fanno lo schermo perché 'l mar si fuggia;

e quali Padoan lungo la Brenta,
per difender lor ville e lor castelli,
anzi che Carentana il caldo senta:

a tale imagine eran fatti quelli,
tutto che né sì alti né sì grossi,
qual che si fosse, lo maestro félli.

Già eravam da la selva rimossi
tanto, ch'i' non avrei visto dov'era,
perch'io in dietro rivolto mi fossi,

quando incontrammo d'anime una schiera
che venian lungo l'argine, e ciascuna
ci riguardava come suol da sera

guardare uno altro sotto nuova luna;
e sì ver' noi aguzzavan le ciglia
come 'l vecchio sartor fa ne la cruna.

Così adocchiato da cotal famiglia,
fui conosciuto da un, che mi prese
per lo lembo e gridò: "Qual maraviglia!".

E io, quando ‘l suo braccio a me distese,
ficcaï li occhi per lo cotto aspetto,
sì che ‘l viso abbrusciato non difese

la conoscenza süa al mio ‘ntelletto;
e chinando la mano a la sua faccia,
rispuosi: “Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?”.

E quelli: “O figliuol mio, non ti dispiaccia
se Brunetto Latino un poco teco
ritorna ‘n dietro e lascia andar la traccia”.

I’ dissi lui: “Quanto posso, ven preco;
e se volete che con voi m’asseggia,
faròl, se piace a costui che vo seco”.

“O figliuol”, disse, “qual di questa greggia
s’arresta punto, giace poi cent’anni
sanz’arrostarsi quando ‘l foco il feggia.

Però va oltre: i’ ti verrò a’ panni;
e poi rigiugnerò la mia masnada,
che va piangendo i suoi etterni danni”.

Io non osava scender de la strada
per andar par di lui; ma ‘l capo chino
tenea com’uom che reverente vada.

El cominciò: “Qual fortuna o destino
anzi l’ultimo dì qua giù ti mena?
e chi è questi che mostra ‘l cammino?”.

“Là sù di sopra, in la vita serena”,
rispuos’io lui, “mi smarri’ in una valle,
avanti che l’età mia fosse piena.

Pur ier mattina le volsi le spalle:
questi m’apparve, tornand’ïo in quella,
e reducemi a ca per questo calle”.

Ed elli a me: “Se tu segui tua stella,
non puoi fallire a glorïoso porto,
se ben m’accorsi ne la vita bella;

e s’io non fossi sì per tempo morto,
veggendo il cielo a te così benigno,
dato t’avrei a l’opera conforto.

Ma quello ingrato popolo maligno
che discese di Fiesole ab antico,
e tiene ancor del monte e del macigno,

ti si farà, per tuo ben far, nimico;
ed è ragion, ché tra li lazzi sorbi
si disconvien fruttare al dolce fico.

Vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi;
gent’è avara, invidiosa e superba:
dai lor costumi fa che tu ti forbi.

La tua fortuna tanto onor ti serba,
che l’una parte e l’altra avranno fame
di te; ma lungi fia dal becco l’erba.

Faccian le bestie fiesolane strame
di lor medesme, e non tocchin la pianta,
s’alcuna surge ancora in lor letame,

in cui riviva la sementa santa
di que’ Roman che vi rimaser quando
fu fatto il nido di malizia tanta”.

“Se fosse tutto pieno il mio dimando”,
rispuos’io lui, “voi non sareste ancora
de l’umana natura posto in bando;

ché ‘n la mente m’è fitta, e or m’accora,
la cara e buona imagine paterna
di voi quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora

m’insegnavate come l’uom s’etterna:
e quant’io l’abbia in grado, mentr’io vivo
convien che ne la mia lingua si scerna.

Ciò che narrate di mio corso scrivo,
e serbolo a chiosar con altro testo
a donna che saprà, s’a lei arrivo.

Tanto vogl’io che vi sia manifesto,
pur che mia coscïenza non mi garra,
ch’a la Fortuna, come vuol, son presto.

Non è nuova a li orecchi miei tal arra:
però giri Fortuna la sua rota
come le piace, e ‘l villan la sua marra”.

Lo mio maestro allora in su la gota
destra si volse in dietro e riguardommi;
poi disse: “Bene ascolta chi la nota”.

Né per tanto di men parlando vommi
con ser Brunetto, e dimando chi sono
li suoi compagni più noti e più sommi.

Ed elli a me: “Saper d’alcuno è buono;
de li altri fia laudabile tacerci,
ché ‘l tempo saria corto a tanto suono.

In somma sappi che tutti fur cherci
e litterati grandi e di gran fama,
d’un peccato medesmo al mondo lerci.

Priscian sen va con quella turba grama,
e Francesco d’Accorso anche; e vedervi,
s’avessi avuto di tal tigna brama,

colui potei che dal servo de’ servi
fu trasmutato d’Arno in Bacchiglione,
dove lasciò li mal protesi nervi.

Di più direi; ma ‘l venire e ‘l sermone
più lungo esser non può, però ch’i’ veggio
là surger nuovo fummo del sabbione.

Gente vien con la quale esser non deggio.
Sieti raccomandato il mio Tesoro,
nel qual io vivo ancora, e più non cheggio”.

Poi si rivolse, e parve di coloro
che corrono a Verona il drappo verde
per la campagna; e parve di costoro

quelli che vince, non colui che perde.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto sedicesimo

Canto XVI, ove tratta di quello medesimo girone e di quello medesimo cerchio e di quello medesimo peccato.

Già era in loco onde s'udia 'l rimbombo
de l'acqua che cadea ne l'altro giro,
simile a quel che l'arnie fanno rombo,

quando tre ombre insieme si partiro,
correndo, d'una torma che passava
sotto la pioggia de l'aspro martiro.

Venian ver' noi, e ciascuna gridava:
"Sòstati tu ch'a l'abito ne sembri
essere alcun di nostra terra prava".

Ahimè, che piaghe vidi ne' lor membri,
ricenti e vecchie, da le fiamme incese!
Ancor men duol pur ch'i' me ne rimembri.

A le lor grida il mio dottor s'attese;
volse 'l viso ver' me, e "Or aspetta",
disse, "a costor si vuole esser cortese.

E se non fosse il foco che saetta
la natura del loco, i' dicerei
che meglio stesse a te che a lor la fretta".

Ricominciar, come noi restammo, ei
l'antico verso; e quando a noi fuor giunti,
fenno una rota di sé tutti e trei.

Qual sogliono i campion far nudi e unti,
avvisando lor presa e lor vantaggio,
prima che sien tra lor battuti e punti,

così rotando, ciascuno il visaggio
drizzava a me, sì che 'n contraro il collo

faceva ai piè continüo vïaggio.

E “Se miseria d’esto loco sollo
rende in dispetto noi e nostri prieghi”,
cominciò l’uno, “e ‘l tinto aspetto e brollo,

la fama nostra il tuo animo pieghi
a dirne chi tu se’, che i vivi piedi
così sicuro per lo ‘nferno freghi.

Questi, l’orme di cui pestar mi vedi,
tutto che nudo e dipelato vada,
fu di grado maggior che tu non credi:

nepote fu de la buona Gualdrada;
Guido Guerra ebbe nome, e in sua vita
fece col senno assai e con la spada.

L’altro, ch’appresso me la rena trita,
è Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, la cui voce
nel mondo sù dovria esser gradita.

E io, che posto son con loro in croce,
Iacopo Rusticucci fui, e certo
la fiera moglie più ch’altro mi nuoce”.

S’i’ fossi stato dal foco coperto,
gittato mi sarei tra lor di sotto,
e credo che ‘l dottor l’avria sofferto;

ma perch’io mi sarei brusciato e cotto,
vinse paura la mia buona voglia
che di loro abbracciar mi facea ghiotto.

Poi cominciai: “Non dispetto, ma doglia
la vostra condizion dentro mi fisse,
tanta che tardi tutta si dispoglia,

tosto che questo mio segnor mi disse
parole per le quali i’ mi pensai

che qual voi siete, tal gente venisse.

Di vostra terra sono, e sempre mai
l'ovra di voi e li onorati nomi
con affezion ritrassi e ascoltai.

Lascio lo fele e vo per dolci pomi
promessi a me per lo verace duca;
ma 'nfino al centro pria convien ch'i' tomi".

"Se lungamente l'anima conduca
le membra tue", rispuose quelli ancora,
"e se la fama tua dopo te luca,

cortesia e valor dì se dimora
ne la nostra città sì come suole,
o se del tutto se n'è gita fora;

ché Guiglielmo Borsiere, il qual si duole
con noi per poco e va là coi compagni,
assai ne cruccia con le sue parole".

"La gente nuova e i sùbiti guadagni
orgoglio e dismisura han generata,
Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten piagni".

Così gridai con la faccia levata;
e i tre, che ciò inteser per risposta,
guardar l'un l'altro com'al ver si guata.

"Se l'altre volte sì poco ti costa",
rispuoser tutti, "il satisfare altrui,
felice te se sì parli a tua posta!

Però, se campi d'esti luoghi bui
e torni a riveder le belle stelle,
quando ti gioverà dicere "I' fui",

fa che di noi a la gente favelle".
Indi rupper la rota, e a fuggirsi

ali sembiar le gambe loro isnelle.

Un amen non saria possuto dirsi
tosto così com'e' fuoro spariti;
per ch'al maestro parve di partirsi.

Io lo seguiva, e poco eravam iti,
che 'l suon de l'acqua n'era sì vicino,
che per parlar saremmo a pena uditi.

Come quel fiume c' ha proprio cammino
prima dal Monte Viso 'nver' levante,
da la sinistra costa d'Apennino,

che si chiama Acquacheta suso, avante
che si divalli giù nel basso letto,
e a Forlì di quel nome è vacante,

rimbomba là sovra San Benedetto
de l'Alpe per cadere ad una scesa
ove dovea per mille esser recetto;

così, giù d'una ripa discoscesa,
trovammo risonar quell'acqua tinta,
sì che 'n poc'ora avria l'orecchia offesa.

Io avea una corda intorno cinta,
e con essa pensai alcuna volta
prender la lonza a la pelle dipinta.

Poscia ch'io l'ebbi tutta da me sciolta,
sì come 'l duca m'avea comandato,
porsila a lui aggroppata e ravvolta.

Ond'ei si volse inver' lo destro lato,
e alquanto di lunge da la sponda
la gittò giuso in quell'alto burrato.

'E' pur convien che novità risponda',
dicea fra me medesmo, 'al novo cenno

che ‘l maestro con l’occhio sì seconda’.

Ahi quanto cauti li uomini esser dienno
presso a color che non veggion pur l’ovra,
ma per entro i pensier miran col senno!

El disse a me: “Tosto verrà di sovra
ciò ch’io attendo e che il tuo pensier sogna;
tosto convien ch’al tuo viso si scovra”.

Sempre a quel ver c’ ha faccia di menzogna
de’ l’uom chiuder le labbra fin ch’el puote,
però che sanza colpa fa vergogna;

ma qui tacer nol posso; e per le note
di questa comedìa, lettor, ti giuro,
s’elle non sien di lunga grazia vòte,

ch’i’ vidi per quell’ aere grosso e scuro
venir notando una figura in suso,
maravigliosa ad ogne cor sicuro,

sì come torna colui che va giuso
talora a solver l’àncora ch’aggrappa
o scoglio o altro che nel mare è chiuso,

che ‘n sù si stende e da piè si rattrappa.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciassettesimo

Canto XVII, nel quale si tratta del discendimento nel luogo detto Malebolge, che è l'ottavo cerchio de l'inferno; ancora fa proemio alquanto di quelli che sono nel settimo circulo; e quivi si truova il demonio Gerione sopra ' quale passaro il fiume; e quivi parlò Dante ad alcuni prestatori e usurai del settimo cerchio.

"Ecco la fiera con la coda aguzza,
che passa i monti e rompe i muri e l'armi!
Ecco colei che tutto 'l mondo appuzza!".

Sì cominciò lo mio duca a parlarmi;
e accennolle che venisse a proda,
vicino al fin d'i passeggiati marmi.

E quella sozza imagine di froda
sen venne, e arrivò la testa e 'l busto,
ma 'n su la riva non trasse la coda.

La faccia sua era faccia d'uom giusto,
tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle,
e d'un serpente tutto l'altro fusto;

due branche avea pilose insin l'ascelle;
lo dosso e 'l petto e ambedue le coste
dipinti avea di nodi e di rotelle.

Con più color, sommesse e sovraposte
non fer mai drappi Tartari né Turchi,
né fuor tai tele per Aragne imposte.

Come talvolta stanno a riva i burchi,
che parte sono in acqua e parte in terra,
e come là tra li Tedeschi lurchi

lo bivero s'assetta a far sua guerra,
così la fiera pessima si stava
su l'orlo ch'è di pietra e 'l sabbion serra.

Nel vano tutta sua coda guizzava,
torcendo in sù la venenosa forca
ch’a guisa di scorpion la punta armava.

Lo duca disse: “Or convien che si torca
la nostra via un poco insino a quella
bestia malvagia che colà si corca”.

Però scendemmo a la destra mammella,
e diece passi femmo in su lo stremo,
per ben cessar la rena e la fiammella.

E quando noi a lei venuti semo,
poco più oltre veggio in su la rena
gente seder propinqua al loco scemo.

Quivi ‘l maestro “Acciò che tutta piena
esperïenza d’esto giron porti”,
mi disse, “va, e vedi la lor mena.

Li tuoi ragionamenti sian là corti;
mentre che torni, parlerò con questa,
che ne conceda i suoi omeri forti”.

Così ancor su per la strema testa
di quel settimo cerchio tutto solo
andai, dove sedea la gente mesta.

Per li occhi fora scoppiava lor duolo;
di qua, di là soccorrien con le mani
quando a’ vapori, e quando al caldo suolo:

non altrimenti fan di state i cani
or col ceffo or col piè, quando son morsi
o da pulci o da mosche o da tafani.

Poi che nel viso a certi li occhi porsi,
ne’ quali ‘l doloroso foco casca,
non ne conobbi alcun; ma io m’accorsi

che dal collo a ciascun pendea una tasca
ch’avea certo colore e certo segno,
e quindi par che ‘l loro occhio si pasca.

E com’io riguardando tra lor vegno,
in una borsa gialla vidi azzurro
che d’un leone avea faccia e contegno.

Poi, procedendo di mio sguardo il curro,
vidine un’altra come sangue rossa,
mostrando un’oca bianca più che burro.

E un che d’una scrofa azzurra e grossa
segnato avea lo suo sacchetto bianco,
mi disse: “Che fai tu in questa fossa?

Or te ne va; e perché se’ vivo anco,
sappi che ‘l mio vicin Vitalïano
sederà qui dal mio sinistro fianco.

Con questi Fiorentin son padoano:
spesse fïate mi ‘ntronan li orecchi
gridando: “Vegna ‘l cavalier sovrano,

che recherà la tasca con tre becchi!”“.
Qui distorse la bocca e di fuor trasse
la lingua, come bue che ‘l naso lecchi.

E io, temendo no ‘l più star crucciasse
lui che di poco star m’avea ‘mmonito,
torna’ mi in dietro da l’anime lasse.

Trova’ il duca mio ch’era salito
già su la groppa del fiero animale,
e disse a me: “Or sie forte e ardito.

Omai si scende per sì fatte scale;
monta dinanzi, ch’i’ voglio esser mezzo,
sì che la coda non possa far male”.

Qual è colui che sì presso ha ‘l riprezzo
de la quartana, c’ ha già l’unghie smorte,
e triema tutto pur guardando ‘l rezzo,

tal divenn’io a le parole porte;
ma vergogna mi fé le sue minacce,
che innanzi a buon segnor fa servo forte.

I’ m’assettai in su quelle spallacce;
sì volli dir, ma la voce non venne
com’io credetti: ‘Fa che tu m’abbracce’.

Ma esso, ch’altra volta mi sovvenne
ad altro forse, tosto ch’i’ montai
con le braccia m’avvinse e mi sostenne;

e disse: “Gerïon, moviti omai:
le rote larghe, e lo scender sia poco;
pensa la nova soma che tu hai”.

Come la navicella esce di loco
in dietro in dietro, sì quindi si tolse;
e poi ch’al tutto si sentì a gioco,

là ‘v’era ‘l petto, la coda rivolse,
e quella tesa, come anguilla, mosse,
e con le branche l’aere a sé raccolse.

Maggior paura non credo che fosse
quando Fetonte abbandonò li freni,
per che ‘l ciel, come pare ancor, si cosse;

né quando Icaro misero le reni
sentì spennar per la scaldata cera,
gridando il padre a lui “Mala via tieni!”,

che fu la mia, quando vidi ch’i’ era
ne l’aere d’ogne parte, e vidi spenta
ogne veduta fuor che de la fera.

Ella sen va notando lenta lenta;
rota e discende, ma non me n’accorgo
se non che al viso e di sotto mi venta.

Io sentia già da la man destra il gorgo
far sotto noi un orribile scroscio,
per che con li occhi ‘n giù la testa sporgo.

Allor fu’ io più timido a lo stoscio,
però ch’i’ vidi fuochi e senti’ pianti;
ond’io tremando tutto mi raccoscio.

E vidi poi, ché nol vedea davanti,
lo scendere e ‘l girar per li gran mali
che s’appressavan da diversi canti.

Come ‘l falcon ch’è stato assai su l’ali,
che sanza veder logoro o uccello
fa dire al falconiere “Omè, tu cali!”,

discende lasso onde si move isnello,
per cento rote, e da lunge si pone
dal suo maestro, disdegnoso e fello;

così ne puose al fondo Gerïone
al piè al piè de la stagliata rocca,
e, discarcate le nostre persone,

si dileguò come da corda cocca.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciottesimo

Canto XVIII, ove si descrive come è fatto il luogo di Malebolge e tratta de' ruffiani e ingannatori e lusinghieri, ove dinomina in questa setta messer Venedico Caccianemico da Bologna e Giasone greco e Alessio de li Interminelli da Lucca, e tratta come sono state loro pene.

Luogo è in inferno detto Malebolge,
tutto di pietra di color ferrigno,
come la cerchia che dintorno il volge.

Nel dritto mezzo del campo maligno
vaneggia un pozzo assai largo e profondo,
di cui suo loco dicerò l'ordigno.

Quel cinghio che rimane adunque è tondo
tra 'l pozzo e 'l piè de l'alta ripa dura,
e ha distinto in dieci valli il fondo.

Quale, dove per guardia de le mura
più e più fossi cingon li castelli,
la parte dove son rende figura,

tale imagine quivi facean quelli;
e come a tai fortezze da' lor sogli
a la ripa di fuor son ponticelli,

così da imo de la roccia scogli
movien che ricidien li argini e ' fossi
infino al pozzo che i tronca e raccogli.

In questo luogo, de la schiena scossi
di Gerïon, trovammoci; e 'l poeta
tenne a sinistra, e io dietro mi mossi.

A la man destra vidi nova pieta,
novo tormento e novi frustatori,
di che la prima bolgia era repleta.

Nel fondo erano ignudi i peccatori;
dal mezzo in qua ci venien verso ‘l volto,
di là con noi, ma con passi maggiori,

come i Roman per l’essercito molto,
l’anno del giubileo, su per lo ponte
hanno a passar la gente modo colto,

che da l’un lato tutti hanno la fronte
verso ‘l castello e vanno a Santo Pietro,
da l’altra sponda vanno verso ‘l monte.

Di qua, di là, su per lo sasso tetro
vidi demon cornuti con gran ferze,
che li battien crudelmente di retro.

Ahi come facean lor levar le berze
a le prime percosse! già nessuno
le seconde aspettava né le terze.

Mentr’io andava, li occhi miei in uno
furo scontrati; e io sì tosto dissi:
“Già di veder costui non son digiuno”.

Per ch’ïo a figurarlo i piedi affissi;
e ‘l dolce duca meco si ristette,
e assentio ch’alquanto in dietro gissi.

E quel frustato celar si credette
bassando ‘l viso; ma poco li valse,
ch’io dissi: “O tu che l’occhio a terra gette,

se le fazion che porti non son false,
Venedico se’ tu Caccianemico.
Ma che ti mena a sì pungenti salse?”.

Ed elli a me: “Mal volontier lo dico;
ma sforzami la tua chiara favella,
che mi fa sovvenir del mondo antico.

I’ fui colui che la Ghisolabella
condussi a far la voglia del marchese,
come che suoni la sconcia novella.

E non pur io qui piango bolognese;
anzi n’è questo loco tanto pieno,
che tante lingue non son ora apprese

a dicer ‘sipa’ tra Sàvena e Reno;
e se di ciò vuoi fede o testimonio,
rècati a mente il nostro avaro seno”.

Così parlando il percosse un demonio
de la sua scurïada, e disse: “Via,
ruffian! qui non son femmine da conio”.

I’ mi raggiunsi con la scorta mia;
poscia con pochi passi divenimmo
là ‘v’uno scoglio de la ripa uscia.

Assai leggeramente quel salimmo;
e vòlti a destra su per la sua scheggia,
da quelle cerchie etterne ci partimmo.

Quando noi fummo là dov’el vaneggia
di sotto per dar passo a li sferzati,
lo duca disse: “Attienti, e fa che feggia

lo viso in te di quest’altri mal nati,
ai quali ancor non vedesti la faccia
però che son con noi insieme andati”.

Del vecchio ponte guardavam la traccia
che venìa verso noi da l’altra banda,
e che la ferza similmente scaccia.

E ‘l buon maestro, sanza mia dimanda,
mi disse: “Guarda quel grande che vene,
e per dolor non par lagrime spanda:

quanto aspetto reale ancor ritene!
Quelli è Iasón, che per cuore e per senno
li Colchi del monton privati féne.

Ello passò per l'isola di Lenno
poi che l'ardite femmine spietate
tutti li maschi loro a morte dienno.

Ivi con segni e con parole ornate
Isifile ingannò, la giovinetta
che prima avea tutte l'altre ingannate.

Lasciolla quivi, gravida, soletta;
tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna;
e anche di Medea si fa vendetta.

Con lui sen va chi da tal parte inganna;
e questo basti de la prima valle
sapere e di color che 'n sé assanna".

Già eravam là 've lo stretto calle
con l'argine secondo s'incrocicchia,
e fa di quello ad un altr'arco spalle.

Quindi sentimmo gente che si nicchia
ne l'altra bolgia e che col muso scuffa,
e sé medesma con le palme picchia.

Le ripe eran grommate d'una muffa,
per l'alito di giù che vi s'appasta,
che con li occhi e col naso facea zuffa.

Lo fondo è cupo sì, che non ci basta
loco a veder sanza montare al dosso
de l'arco, ove lo scoglio più sovrasta.

Quivi venimmo; e quindi giù nel fosso
vidi gente attuffata in uno sterco
che da li uman privadi parea mosso.

E mentre ch’io là giù con l’occhio cerco,
vidi un col capo sì di merda lordo,
che non parëa s’era laico o cherco.

Quei mi sgridò: “Perché se’ tu sì gordo
di riguardar più me che li altri brutti?”.
E io a lui: “Perché, se ben ricordo,

già t’ ho veduto coi capelli asciutti,
e se’ Alessio Interminei da Lucca:
però t’adocchio più che li altri tutti”.

Ed elli allor, battendosi la zucca:
“Qua giù m’ hanno sommerso le lusinghe
ond’io non ebbi mai la lingua stucca”.

Appresso ciò lo duca “Fa che pinghe”,
mi disse, “il viso un poco più avante,
sì che la faccia ben con l’occhio attinghe

di quella sozza e scapigliata fante
che là si graffia con l’unghie merdose,
e or s’accoscia e ora è in piedi stante.

Taïde è, la puttana che rispuose
al drudo suo quando disse “Ho io grazie
grandi apo te?”: “Anzi maravigliose!”.

E quinci sian le nostre viste sazie”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciannovesimo

Canto XIX, nel quale sgrida contra li simoniachi in persona di Simone Mago, che fu al tempo di san Pietro e di santo Paulo, e contra tutti coloro che simonia seguitano, e qui pone le pene che sono concedute a coloro che seguitano il sopradetto vizio, e dinomaci entro papa Niccola de li Orsini di Roma perché seguitò simonia; e pone de la terza bolgia de l'inferno.

O Simon mago, o miseri seguaci
che le cose di Dio, che di bontate
deon essere spose, e voi rapaci

per oro e per argento avolterate,
or convien che per voi suoni la tromba,
però che ne la terza bolgia state.

Già eravamo, a la seguente tomba,
montati de lo scoglio in quella parte
ch'a punto sovra mezzo 'l fosso piomba.

O somma sapïenza, quanta è l'arte
che mostri in cielo, in terra e nel mal mondo,
e quanto giusto tua virtù comparte!

Io vidi per le coste e per lo fondo
piena la pietra livida di fóri,
d'un largo tutti e ciascun era tondo.

Non mi parean men ampi né maggiori
che que' che son nel mio bel San Giovanni,
fatti per loco d'i battezzatori;

l'un de li quali, ancor non è molt'anni,
rupp'io per un che dentro v'annegava:
e questo sia suggel ch'ogn'omo sganni.

Fuor de la bocca a ciascun soperchiava
d'un peccator li piedi e de le gambe
infino al grosso, e l'altro dentro stava.

Le piante erano a tutti accese intrambe;
per che sì forte guizzavan le giunte,
che spezzate averien ritorte e strambe.

Qual suole il fiammeggiar de le cose unte
muoversi pur su per la strema buccia,
tal era lì dai calcagni a le punte.

“Chi è colui, maestro, che si cruccia
guizzando più che li altri suoi consorti”,
diss’io, “e cui più roggia fiamma succia?”.

Ed elli a me: “Se tu vuo’ ch’i’ ti porti
là giù per quella ripa che più giace,
da lui saprai di sé e de’ suoi torti”.

E io: “Tanto m’è bel, quanto a te piace:
tu se’ segnore, e sai ch’i’ non mi parto
dal tuo volere, e sai quel che si tace”.

Allor venimmo in su l’argine quarto;
volgemmo e discendemmo a mano stanca
là giù nel fondo foracchiato e arto.

Lo buon maestro ancor de la sua anca
non mi dipuose, sì mi giunse al rotto
di quel che si piangeva con la zanca.

“O qual che se’ che ‘l di sù tien di sotto,
anima trista come pal commessa”,
comincia’ io a dir, “se puoi, fa motto”.

Io stava come ‘l frate che confessa
lo perfido assessin, che, poi ch’è fitto,
richiama lui per che la morte cessa.

Ed el gridò: “Se’ tu già costì ritto,
se’ tu già costì ritto, Bonifazio?
Di parecchi anni mi mentì lo scritto.

Se’ tu sì tosto di quell’aver sazio
per lo qual non temesti tòrre a ‘nganno
la bella donna, e poi di farne strazio?”.

Tal mi fec’io, quai son color che stanno,
per non intender ciò ch’è lor risposto,
quasi scornati, e risponder non sanno.

Allor Virgilio disse: “Dilli tosto:
“Non son colui, non son colui che credi”“;
e io rispuosi come a me fu imposto.

Per che lo spirto tutti storse i piedi;
poi, sospirando e con voce di pianto,
mi disse: “Dunque che a me richiedi?

Se di saper ch’i’ sia ti cal cotanto,
che tu abbi però la ripa corsa,
sappi ch’i’ fui vestito del gran manto;

e veramente fui figliuol de l’orsa,
cupido sì per avanzar li orsatti,
che sù l’avere e qui me misi in borsa.

Di sotto al capo mio son li altri tratti
che precedetter me simoneggiando,
per le fessure de la pietra piatti.

Là giù cascherò io altresì quando
verrà colui ch’i’ credea che tu fossi,
allor ch’i’ feci ‘l sùbito dimando.

Ma più è ‘l tempo già che i piè mi cossi
e ch’i’ son stato così sottosopra,
ch’el non starà piantato coi piè rossi:

ché dopo lui verrà di più laida opra,
di ver’ ponente, un pastor sanza legge,
tal che convien che lui e me ricuopra.

Nuovo Iasón sarà, di cui si legge
ne’ Maccabei; e come a quel fu molle
suo re, così fia lui chi Francia regge”.

Io non so s’i’ mi fui qui troppo folle,
ch’i’ pur rispuosi lui a questo metro:
“Deh, or mi dì: quanto tesoro volle

Nostro Segnore in prima da san Pietro
ch’ei ponesse le chiavi in sua balìa?
Certo non chiese se non “Viemmi retro”.

Né Pier né li altri tolsero a Matia
oro od argento, quando fu sortito
al loco che perdé l’anima ria.

Però ti sta, ché tu se’ ben punito;
e guarda ben la mal tolta moneta
ch’esser ti fece contra Carlo ardito.

E se non fosse ch’ancor lo mi vieta
la reverenza de le somme chiavi
che tu tenesti ne la vita lieta,

io userei parole ancor più gravi;
ché la vostra avarizia il mondo attrista,
calcando i buoni e sollevando i pravi.

Di voi pastor s’accorse il Vangelista,
quando colei che siede sopra l’acque
puttaneggiar coi regi a lui fu vista;

quella che con le sette teste nacque,
e da le diece corna ebbe argomento,
fin che virtute al suo marito piacque.

Fatto v’avete dio d’oro e d’argento;
e che altro è da voi a l’idolatre,
se non ch’elli uno, e voi ne orate cento?

Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre,
non la tua conversion, ma quella dote
che da te prese il primo ricco patre!”.

E mentr’io li cantava cotai note,
o ira o coscïenza che ‘l mordesse,
forte spingava con ambo le piote.

I’ credo ben ch’al mio duca piacesse,
con sì contenta labbia sempre attese
lo suon de le parole vere espresse.

Però con ambo le braccia mi prese;
e poi che tutto su mi s’ebbe al petto,
rimontò per la via onde discese.

Né si stancò d’avermi a sé distretto,
sì men portò sovra ‘l colmo de l’arco
che dal quarto al quinto argine è tragetto.

Quivi soavemente spuose il carco,
soave per lo scoglio sconcio ed erto
che sarebbe a le capre duro varco.

Indi un altro vallon mi fu scoperto.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventesimo

Canto XX, dove si tratta de l'indovini e sortilegi e de l'incantatori, e de l'origine di Mantova, di che trattare diede cagione Manto incantatrice; e di loro pene e miseria e de la condizione loro misera, ne la quarta bolgia, in persona di Michele di Scozia e di più altri.

Di nova pena mi conven far versi
e dar matera al ventesimo canto
de la prima canzon, ch'è d'i sommersi.

Io era già disposto tutto quanto
a riguardar ne lo scoperto fondo,
che si bagnava d'angoscioso pianto;

e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
venir, tacendo e lagrimando, al passo
che fanno le letane in questo mondo.

Come 'l viso mi scese in lor più basso,
mirabilmente apparve esser travolto
ciascun tra 'l mento e 'l principio del casso,

ché da le reni era tornato 'l volto,
e in dietro venir li convenia,
perché 'l veder dinanzi era lor tolto.

Forse per forza già di parlasia
si travolse così alcun del tutto;
ma io nol vidi, né credo che sia.

Se Dio ti lasci, lettor, prender frutto
di tua lezione, or pensa per te stesso
com'io potea tener lo viso asciutto,

quando la nostra imagine di presso
vidi sì torta, che 'l pianto de li occhi
le natiche bagnava per lo fesso.

Certo io piangea, poggiato a un de' rocchi
del duro scoglio, sì che la mia scorta
mi disse: "Ancor se' tu de li altri sciocchi?

Qui vive la pietà quand'è ben morta;
chi è più scellerato che colui
che al giudicio divin passion comporta?

Drizza la testa, drizza, e vedi a cui
s'aperse a li occhi d'i Teban la terra;
per ch'ei gridavan tutti: "Dove rui,

Anfïarao? perché lasci la guerra?".
E non restò di ruinare a valle
fino a Minòs che ciascheduno afferra.

Mira c' ha fatto petto de le spalle;
perché volse veder troppo davante,
di retro guarda e fa retroso calle.

Vedi Tiresia, che mutò sembiante
quando di maschio femmina divenne,
cangiandosi le membra tutte quante;

e prima, poi, ribatter li convenne
li duo serpenti avvolti, con la verga,
che rïavesse le maschili penne.

Aronta è quel ch'al ventre li s'atterga,
che ne' monti di Luni, dove ronca
lo Carrarese che di sotto alberga,

ebbe tra ' bianchi marmi la spelonca
per sua dimora; onde a guardar le stelle
e 'l mar non li era la veduta tronca.

E quella che ricuopre le mammelle,
che tu non vedi, con le trecce sciolte,
e ha di là ogne pilosa pelle,

Manto fu, che cercò per terre molte;
poscia si puose là dove nacqu' io;
onde un poco mi piace che m'ascolte.

Poscia che 'l padre suo di vita uscìo
e venne serva la città di Baco,
questa gran tempo per lo mondo gio.

Suso in Italia bella giace un laco,
a piè de l'Alpe che serra Lamagna
sovra Tiralli, c' ha nome Benaco.

Per mille fonti, credo, e più si bagna
tra Garda e Val Camonica e Pennino
de l'acqua che nel detto laco stagna.

Loco è nel mezzo là dove 'l trentino
pastore e quel di Brescia e 'l veronese
segnar poria, s'e' fesse quel cammino.

Siede Peschiera, bello e forte arnese
da fronteggiar Bresciani e Bergamaschi,
ove la riva 'ntorno più discese.

Ivi convien che tutto quanto caschi
ciò che 'n grembo a Benaco star non può,
e fassi fiume giù per verdi paschi.

Tosto che l'acqua a correr mette co,
non più Benaco, ma Mencio si chiama
fino a Governol, dove cade in Po.

Non molto ha corso, ch'el trova una lama,
ne la qual si distende e la 'mpaluda;
e suol di state talor esser grama.

Quindi passando la vergine cruda
vide terra, nel mezzo del pantano,
sanza coltura e d'abitanti nuda.

Lì, per fuggire ogne consorzio umano,
ristette con suoi servi a far sue arti,
e visse, e vi lasciò suo corpo vano. 87

Li uomini poi che ‘ntorno erano sparti
s’accolsero a quel loco, ch’era forte
per lo pantan ch’avea da tutte parti. 90

Fer la città sovra quell’ossa morte;
e per colei che ‘l loco prima elesse,
Mantüa l’appellar sanz’altra sorte. 93

Già fuor le genti sue dentro più spesse,
prima che la mattia da Casalodi
da Pinamonte inganno ricevesse. 96

Però t’assenno che, se tu mai odi
originar la mia terra altrimenti,
la verità nulla menzogna frodi”. 99

E io: “Maestro, i tuoi ragionamenti
mi son sì certi e prendon sì mia fede,
che li altri mi sarien carboni spenti. 102

Ma dimmi, de la gente che procede,
se tu ne vedi alcun degno di nota;
ché solo a ciò la mia mente rifiede”. 105

Allor mi disse: “Quel che da la gota
porge la barba in su le spalle brune,
fu - quando Grecia fu di maschi vòta, 108

sì ch’a pena rimaser per le cune -
augure, e diede ‘l punto con Calcanta
in Aulide a tagliar la prima fune. 111

Euripilo ebbe nome, e così ‘l canta
l’alta mia tragedìa in alcun loco:
ben lo sai tu che la sai tutta quanta. 114

Quell’altro che ne’ fianchi è così poco,
Michele Scotto fu, che veramente
de le magiche frode seppe ‘l gioco.

Vedi Guido Bonatti; vedi Asdente,
ch’avere inteso al cuoio e a lo spago
ora vorrebbe, ma tardi si pente.

Vedi le triste che lasciaron l’ago,
la spuola e ‘l fuso, e fecersi ‘ndivine;
fecer malie con erbe e con imago.

Ma vienne omai, ché già tiene ‘l confine
d’amendue li emisperi e tocca l’onda
sotto Sobilia Caino e le spine;

e già iernotte fu la luna tonda:
ben ten de’ ricordar, ché non ti nocque
alcuna volta per la selva fonda”.

Sì mi parlava, e andavamo introcque.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventunesimo

Canto XXI, il quale tratta de le pene ne le quali sono puniti coloro che commisero baratteria, nel quale vizio abbomina li lucchesi; e qui tratta di dieci demoni, ministri a l'offizio di questo luogo; e cogliesi qui il tempo che fue compilata per Dante questa opera.

Così di ponte in ponte, altro parlando
che la mia comedìa cantar non cura,
venimmo; e tenavamo 'l colmo, quando

restammo per veder l'altra fessura
di Malebolge e li altri pianti vani;
e vidila mirabilmente oscura.

Quale ne l'arzanà de' Viniziani
bolle l'inverno la tenace pece
a rimpalmare i legni lor non sani,

ché navicar non ponno - in quella vece
chi fa suo legno novo e chi ristoppa
le coste a quel che più vïaggi fece;

chi ribatte da proda e chi da poppa;
altri fa remi e altri volge sarte;
chi terzeruolo e artimon rintoppa -:

tal, non per foco ma per divin'arte,
bollia là giuso una pegola spessa,
che 'nviscava la ripa d'ogne parte.

I' vedea lei, ma non vedëa in essa
mai che le bolle che 'l bollor levava,
e gonfiar tutta, e riseder compressa.

Mentr'io là giù fisamente mirava,
lo duca mio, dicendo "Guarda, guarda!",
mi trasse a sé del loco dov'io stava.

Allor mi volsi come l’uom cui tarda
di veder quel che li convien fuggire
e cui paura sùbita sgagliarda, 27

che, per veder, non indugia ‘l partire:
e vidi dietro a noi un diavol nero
correndo su per lo scoglio venire. 30

Ahi quant’elli era ne l’aspetto fero!
e quanto mi parea ne l’atto acerbo,
con l’ali aperte e sovra i piè leggero! 33

L’omero suo, ch’era aguto e superbo,
carcava un peccator con ambo l’anche,
e quei tenea de’ piè ghermito ‘l nerbo. 36

Del nostro ponte disse: “O Malebranche,
ecco un de li anzïan di Santa Zita!
Mettetel sotto, ch’i’ torno per anche 39

a quella terra, che n’è ben fornita:
ogn’uom v’è barattier, fuor che Bonturo;
del no, per li denar, vi si fa ita”. 42

Là giù ‘l buttò, e per lo scoglio duro
si volse; e mai non fu mastino sciolto
con tanta fretta a seguitar lo furo. 45

Quel s’attuffò, e tornò sù convolto;
ma i demon che del ponte avean coperchio,
gridar: “Qui non ha loco il Santo Volto! 48

qui si nuota altrimenti che nel Serchio!
Però, se tu non vuo’ di nostri graffi,
non far sopra la pegola soverchio”. 51

Poi l’addentar con più di cento raffi,
disser: “Coverto convien che qui balli,
sì che, se puoi, nascosamente accaffi”. 54

Non altrimenti i cuoci a' lor vassalli
fanno attuffare in mezzo la caldaia
la carne con li uncin, perché non galli.

Lo buon maestro "Acciò che non si paia
che tu ci sia", mi disse, "giù t'acquatta
dopo uno scheggio, ch'alcun schermo t'aia;

e per nulla offension che mi sia fatta,
non temer tu, ch'i' ho le cose conte,
perch'altra volta fui a tal baratta".

Poscia passò di là dal co del ponte;
e com'el giunse in su la ripa sesta,
mestier li fu d'aver sicura fronte.

Con quel furore e con quella tempesta
ch'escono i cani a dosso al poverello
che di sùbito chiede ove s'arresta,

usciron quei di sotto al ponticello,
e volser contra lui tutt'i runcigli;
ma el gridò: "Nessun di voi sia fello!

Innanzi che l'uncin vostro mi pigli,
traggasi avante l'un di voi che m'oda,
e poi d'arruncigliarmi si consigli".

Tutti gridaron: "Vada Malacoda!";
per ch'un si mosse - e li altri stetter fermi -
e venne a lui dicendo: "Che li approda?".

"Credi tu, Malacoda, qui vedermi
esser venuto", disse 'l mio maestro,
"sicuro già da tutti vostri schermi,

sanza voler divino e fato destro?
Lascian'andar, ché nel cielo è voluto
ch'i' mostri altrui questo cammin silvestro".

Allor li fu l’orgoglio sì caduto,
ch’e’ si lasciò cascar l’uncino a’ piedi,
e disse a li altri: “Omai non sia feruto”.

E ‘l duca mio a me: “O tu che siedi
tra li scheggion del ponte quatto quatto,
sicuramente omai a me ti riedi”.

Per ch’io mi mossi e a lui venni ratto;
e i diavoli si fecer tutti avanti,
sì ch’io temetti ch’ei tenesser patto;

così vid’ïo già temer li fanti
ch’uscivan patteggiati di Caprona,
veggendo sé tra nemici cotanti.

I’ m’accostai con tutta la persona
lungo ‘l mio duca, e non torceva li occhi
da la sembianza lor ch’era non buona.

Ei chinavan li raffi e “Vuo’ che ‘l tocchi”,
diceva l’un con l’altro, “in sul groppone?”.
E rispondien: “Sì, fa che gliel’accocchi”.

Ma quel demonio che tenea sermone
col duca mio, si volse tutto presto
e disse: “Posa, posa, Scarmiglione!”.

Poi disse a noi: “Più oltre andar per questo
iscoglio non si può, però che giace
tutto spezzato al fondo l’arco sesto.

E se l’andare avante pur vi piace,
andatevene su per questa grotta;
presso è un altro scoglio che via face.

Ier, più oltre cinqu’ ore che quest’otta,
mille dugento con sessanta sei
anni compié che qui la via fu rotta.

Io mando verso là di questi miei
a riguardar s'alcun se ne sciorina;
gite con lor, che non saranno rei".

"Tra' ti avante, Alichino, e Calcabrina",
cominciò elli a dire, "e tu, Cagnazzo;
e Barbariccia guidi la decina.

Libicocco vegn'oltre e Draghignazzo,
Cirïatto sannuto e Graffiacane
e Farfarello e Rubicante pazzo.

Cercate 'ntorno le boglienti pane;
costor sian salvi infino a l'altro scheggio
che tutto intero va sovra le tane".

"Omè, maestro, che è quel ch'i' veggio?",
diss'io, "deh, sanza scorta andianci soli,
se tu sa' ir; ch'i' per me non la cheggio.

Se tu se' sì accorto come suoli,
non vedi tu ch'e' digrignan li denti
e con le ciglia ne minaccian duoli?".

Ed elli a me: "Non vo' che tu paventi;
lasciali digrignar pur a lor senno,
ch'e' fanno ciò per li lessi dolenti".

Per l'argine sinistro volta dienno;
ma prima avea ciascun la lingua stretta
coi denti, verso lor duca, per cenno;

ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiduesimo

Canto XXII, nel quale abomina quelli di Sardigna e tratta alcuna cosa de la sagacitade de' barattieri in persona d'uno navarrese, e de' barattieri medesimi questo canta.

Io vidi già cavalier muover campo,
e cominciare stormo e far lor mostra,
e talvolta partir per loro scampo;

corridor vidi per la terra vostra,
o Aretini, e vidi gir gualdane,
fedir torneamenti e correr giostra;

quando con trombe, e quando con campane,
con tamburi e con cenni di castella,
e con cose nostrali e con istrane;

né già con sì diversa cennamella
cavalier vidi muover né pedoni,
né nave a segno di terra o di stella.

Noi andavam con li diece demoni.
Ahi fiera compagnia! ma ne la chiesa
coi santi, e in taverna coi ghiottoni.

Pur a la pegola era la mia 'ntesa,
per veder de la bolgia ogne contegno
e de la gente ch'entro v'era incesa.

Come i dalfini, quando fanno segno
a' marinar con l'arco de la schiena
che s'argomentin di campar lor legno,

talor così, ad alleggiar la pena,
mostrav'alcun de' peccatori 'l dosso
e nascondea in men che non balena.

E come a l’orlo de l’acqua d’un fosso
stanno i ranocchi pur col muso fuori,
sì che celano i piedi e l’altro grosso,

sì stavan d’ogne parte i peccatori;
ma come s’appressava Barbariccia,
così si ritraén sotto i bollori.

I’ vidi, e anco il cor me n’accapriccia,
uno aspettar così, com’elli ‘ncontra
ch’una rana rimane e l’altra spiccia;

e Graffiacan, che li era più di contra,
li arrunciglió le ‘mpegolate chiome
e trassel sù, che mi parve una lontra.

I’ sapea già di tutti quanti ‘l nome,
sì li notai quando fuorono eletti,
e poi ch’e’ si chiamaro, attesi come.

“O Rubicante, fa che tu li metti
li unghioni a dosso, sì che tu lo scuoi!”,
gridavan tutti insieme i maladetti.

E io: “Maestro mio, fa, se tu puoi,
che tu sappi chi è lo sciagurato
venuto a man de li avversari suoi”.

Lo duca mio li s’accostò allato;
domandollo ond’ei fosse, e quei rispuose:
“I’ fui del regno di Navarra nato.

Mia madre a servo d’un segnor mi puose,
che m’avea generato d’un ribaldo,
distruggitor di sé e di sue cose.

Poi fui famiglia del buon re Tebaldo;
quivi mi misi a far baratteria,
di ch’io rendo ragione in questo caldo”.

E Cirïatto, a cui di bocca uscia
d’ogne parte una sanna come a porco,
li fé sentir come l’una sdruscia.

Tra male gatte era venuto ‘l sorco;
ma Barbariccia il chiuse con le braccia
e disse: “State in là, mentr’io lo ‘nforco”.

E al maestro mio volse la faccia;
“Domanda”, disse, “ancor, se più disii
saper da lui, prima ch’altri ‘l disfaccia”.

Lo duca dunque: “Or dì: de li altri rii
conosci tu alcun che sia latino
sotto la pece?”. E quelli: “I’ mi partii,

poco è, da un che fu di là vicino.
Così foss’io ancor con lui coperto,
ch’i’ non temerei unghia né uncino!”.

E Libicocco “Troppo avem sofferto”,
disse; e preseli ‘l braccio col runciglio,
sì che, stracciando, ne portò un lacerto.

Draghignazzo anco i volle dar di piglio
giuso a le gambe; onde ‘l decurio loro
si volse intorno intorno con mal piglio.

Quand’elli un poco rappaciati fuoro,
a lui, ch’ancor mirava sua ferita,
domandò ‘l duca mio sanza dimoro:

“Chi fu colui da cui mala partita
di’ che facesti per venire a proda?”.
Ed ei rispuose: “Fu frate Gomita,

quel di Gallura, vasel d’ogne froda,
ch’ebbe i nemici di suo donno in mano,
e fé sì lor, che ciascun se ne loda.

Danar si tolse e lasciolli di piano,
sì com’e’ dice; e ne li altri offici anche
barattier fu non picciol, ma sovrano. 87

Usa con esso donno Michel Zanche
di Logodoro; e a dir di Sardigna
le lingue lor non si sentono stanche. 90

Omè, vedete l’altro che digrigna;
i’ direi anche, ma i’ temo ch’ello
non s’apparecchi a grattarmi la tigna”. 93

E ‘l gran proposto, vòlto a Farfarello
che stralunava li occhi per fedire,
disse: “Fatti ‘n costà, malvagio uccello!”. 96

“Se voi volete vedere o udire”,
ricominciò lo spaürato appresso,
“Toschi o Lombardi, io ne farò venire; 99

ma stieno i Malebranche un poco in cesso,
sì ch’ei non teman de le lor vendette;
e io, seggendo in questo loco stesso, 102

per un ch’io son, ne farò venir sette
quand’io suffolerò, com’è nostro uso
di fare allor che fori alcun si mette”. 105

Cagnazzo a cotal motto levò ‘l muso,
crollando ‘l capo, e disse: “Odi malizia
ch’elli ha pensata per gittarsi giuso!”. 108

Ond’ei, ch’avea lacciuoli a gran divizia,
rispuose: “Malizioso son io troppo,
quand’io procuro a’ mia maggior trestizia”. 111

Alichin non si tenne e, di rintoppo
a li altri, disse a lui: “Se tu ti cali,
io non ti verrò dietro di gualoppo, 114

ma batterò sovra la pece l’ali.
Lascisi ‘l collo, e sia la ripa scudo,
a veder se tu sol più di noi vali”.

O tu che leggi, udirai nuovo ludo:
ciascun da l’altra costa li occhi volse,
quel prima, ch’a ciò fare era più crudo.

Lo Navarrese ben suo tempo colse;
fermò le piante a terra, e in un punto
saltò e dal proposto lor si sciolse.

Di che ciascun di colpa fu compunto,
ma quei più che cagion fu del difetto;
però si mosse e gridò: “Tu se’ giunto!”.

Ma poco i valse: ché l’ali al sospetto
non potero avanzar; quelli andò sotto,
e quei drizzò volando suso il petto:

non altrimenti l’anitra di botto,
quando ‘l falcon s’appressa, giù s’attuffa,
ed ei ritorna sù crucciato e rotto.

Irato Calcabrina de la buffa,
volando dietro li tenne, invaghito
che quei campasse per aver la zuffa;

e come ‘l barattier fu disparito,
così volse li artigli al suo compagno,
e fu con lui sopra ‘l fosso ghermito.

Ma l’altro fu bene sparvier grifagno
ad artigliar ben lui, e amendue
cadder nel mezzo del bogliente stagno.

Lo caldo sghermitor sùbito fue;
ma però di levarsi era neente,
sì avieno inviscate l’ali sue.

Barbariccia, con li altri suoi dolente,
quattro ne fé volar da l’altra costa
con tutt’i raffi, e assai prestamente

di qua, di là discesero a la posta;
porser li uncini verso li ‘mpaniati,
ch’eran già cotti dentro da la crosta.

E noi lasciammo lor così ‘mpacciati.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventitreesimo

Canto XXIII, nel quale tratta de la divina vendetta contra l'ipocriti; del quale peccato sotto il vocabulo di due cittadini di Bologna abomina l'auttore li bolognesi, e li giudei sotto il nome d'Anna e di Caifas; e qui è la sesta bolgia.

Taciti, soli, sanza compagnia
n'andavam l'un dinanzi e l'altro dopo,
come frati minor vanno per via.

Vòlt'era in su la favola d'Isopo
lo mio pensier per la presente rissa,
dov'el parlò de la rana e del topo;

ché più non si pareggia 'mo' e 'issa'
che l'un con l'altro fa, se ben s'accoppia
principio e fine con la mente fissa.

E come l'un pensier de l'altro scoppia,
così nacque di quello un altro poi,
che la prima paura mi fé doppia.

Io pensava così: 'Questi per noi
sono scherniti con danno e con beffa
sì fatta, ch'assai credo che lor nòi.

Se l'ira sovra 'l mal voler s'aggueffa,
ei ne verranno dietro più crudeli
che 'l cane a quella lievre ch'elli acceffa'.

Già mi sentia tutti arricciar li peli
de la paura e stava in dietro intento,
quand'io dissi: "Maestro, se non celi

te e me tostamente, i' ho pavento
d'i Malebranche. Noi li avem già dietro;
io li 'magino sì, che già li sento".

E quei: “S’i’ fossi di piombato vetro,
l’imagine di fuor tua non trarrei
più tosto a me, che quella dentro ‘mpetro.

Pur mo venieno i tuo’ pensier tra ‘ miei,
con simile atto e con simile faccia,
sì che d’intrambi un sol consiglio fei.

S’elli è che sì la destra costa giaccia,
che noi possiam ne l’altra bolgia scendere,
noi fuggirem l’imaginata caccia”.

Già non compié di tal consiglio rendere,
ch’io li vidi venir con l’ali tese
non molto lungi, per volerne prendere.

Lo duca mio di sùbito mi prese,
come la madre ch’al romore è desta
e vede presso a sé le fiamme accese,

che prende il figlio e fugge e non s’arresta,
avendo più di lui che di sé cura,
tanto che solo una camiscia vesta;

e giù dal collo de la ripa dura
supin si diede a la pendente roccia,
che l’un de’ lati a l’altra bolgia tura.

Non corse mai sì tosto acqua per doccia
a volger ruota di molin terragno,
quand’ella più verso le pale approccia,

come ‘l maestro mio per quel vivagno,
portandosene me sovra ‘l suo petto,
come suo figlio, non come compagno.

A pena fuoro i piè suoi giunti al letto
del fondo giù, ch’e’ furon in sul colle
sovresso noi; ma non lì era sospetto:

ché l’alta provedenza che lor volle
porre ministri de la fossa quinta,
poder di partirs’indi a tutti tolle. 57

Là giù trovammo una gente dipinta
che giva intorno assai con lenti passi,
piangendo e nel sembiante stanca e vinta. 60

Elli avean cappe con cappucci bassi
dinanzi a li occhi, fatte de la taglia
che in Clugnì per li monaci fassi. 63

Di fuor dorate son, sì ch’elli abbaglia;
ma dentro tutte piombo, e gravi tanto,
che Federigo le mettea di paglia. 66

Oh in etterno faticoso manto!
Noi ci volgemmo ancor pur a man manca
con loro insieme, intenti al tristo pianto; 69

ma per lo peso quella gente stanca
venìa sì pian, che noi eravam nuovi
di compagnia ad ogne mover d’anca. 72

Per ch’io al duca mio: “Fa che tu trovi
alcun ch’al fatto o al nome si conosca,
e li occhi, sì andando, intorno movi”. 75

E un che ‘ntese la parola tosca,
di retro a noi gridò: “Tenete i piedi,
voi che correte sì per l’aura fosca! 78

Forse ch’avrai da me quel che tu chiedi”.
Onde ‘l duca si volse e disse: “Aspetta,
e poi secondo il suo passo procedi”. 81

Ristetti, e vidi due mostrar gran fretta
de l’animo, col viso, d’esser meco;
ma tardavali ‘l carco e la via stretta. 84

Quando fuor giunti, assai con l’occhio bieco
mi rimiraron sanza far parola;
poi si volsero in sé, e dicean seco:

“Costui par vivo a l’atto de la gola;
e s’e’ son morti, per qual privilegio
vanno scoperti de la grave stola?”.

Poi disser me: “O Tosco, ch’al collegio
de l’ipocriti tristi se’ venuto,
dir chi tu se’ non avere in dispregio”.

E io a loro: “I’ fui nato e cresciuto
sovra ‘l bel fiume d’Arno a la gran villa,
e son col corpo ch’i’ ho sempre avuto.

Ma voi chi siete, a cui tanto distilla
quant’i’ veggio dolor giù per le guance?
e che pena è in voi che sì sfavilla?”.

E l’un rispuose a me: “Le cappe rance
son di piombo sì grosse, che li pesi
fan così cigolar le lor bilance.

Frati godenti fummo, e bolognesi;
io Catalano e questi Loderingo
nomati, e da tua terra insieme presi

come suole esser tolto un uom solingo,
per conservar sua pace; e fummo tali,
ch’ancor si pare intorno dal Gardingo”.

Io cominciai: “O frati, i vostri mali...”;
ma più non dissi, ch’a l’occhio mi corse
un, crucifisso in terra con tre pali.

Quando mi vide, tutto si distorse,
soffiando ne la barba con sospiri;
e ‘l frate Catalan, ch’a ciò s’accorse,

mi disse: “Quel confitto che tu miri,
consigliò i Farisei che convenia
porre un uom per lo popolo a’ martìri.

Attraversato è, nudo, ne la via,
come tu vedi, ed è mestier ch’el senta
qualunque passa, come pesa, pria.

E a tal modo il socero si stenta
in questa fossa, e li altri dal concilio
che fu per li Giudei mala sementa”.

Allor vid’io maravigliar Virgilio
sovra colui ch’era disteso in croce
tanto vilmente ne l’etterno essilio.

Poscia drizzò al frate cotal voce:
“Non vi dispiaccia, se vi lece, dirci
s’a la man destra giace alcuna foce

onde noi amendue possiamo uscirci,
sanza costrigner de li angeli neri
che vegnan d’esto fondo a dipartirci”.

Rispuose adunque: “Più che tu non speri
s’appressa un sasso che da la gran cerchia
si move e varca tutt’i vallon feri,

salvo che ‘n questo è rotto e nol coperchia;
montar potrete su per la ruina,
che giace in costa e nel fondo soperchia”.

Lo duca stette un poco a testa china;
poi disse: “Mal contava la bisogna
colui che i peccator di qua uncina”.

E ‘l frate: “Io udi’ già dire a Bologna
del diavol vizi assai, tra ‘ quali udi’
ch’elli è bugiardo e padre di menzogna”.

Appresso il duca a gran passi sen gì,
turbato un poco d’ira nel sembiante;
ond’io da li ‘ncarcati mi parti’

dietro a le poste de le care piante.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiquattresimo

Canto XXIV, nel quale tratta de le pene che puniscono li furti, dove trattando de' ladroni sgrida contro a' Pistolesi sotto il vocabulo di Vanni Fucci, per la cui lingua antidice del tempo futuro; ed è la settima bolgia.

In quella parte del giovanetto anno
che 'l sole i crin sotto l'Aquario tempra
e già le notti al mezzo dì sen vanno,

quando la brina in su la terra assempra
l'imagine di sua sorella bianca,
ma poco dura a la sua penna tempra,

lo villanello a cui la roba manca,
si leva, e guarda, e vede la campagna
biancheggiar tutta; ond'ei si batte l'anca,

ritorna in casa, e qua e là si lagna,
come 'l tapin che non sa che si faccia;
poi riede, e la speranza ringavagna,

veggendo 'l mondo aver cangiata faccia
in poco d'ora, e prende suo vincastro
e fuor le pecorelle a pascer caccia.

Così mi fece sbigottir lo mastro
quand'io li vidi sì turbar la fronte,
e così tosto al mal giunse lo 'mpiastro;

ché, come noi venimmo al guasto ponte,
lo duca a me si volse con quel piglio
dolce ch'io vidi prima a piè del monte.

Le braccia aperse, dopo alcun consiglio
eletto seco riguardando prima
ben la ruina, e diedemi di piglio.

E come quei ch’adopera ed estima,
che sempre par che ‘nnanzi si proveggia,
così, levando me sù ver’ la cima 27

d’un ronchione, avvisava un’altra scheggia
dicendo: “Sovra quella poi t’aggrappa;
ma tenta pria s’è tal ch’ella ti reggia”. 30

Non era via da vestito di cappa,
ché noi a pena, ei lieve e io sospinto,
potavam sù montar di chiappa in chiappa. 33

E se non fosse che da quel precinto
più che da l’altro era la costa corta,
non so di lui, ma io sarei ben vinto. 36

Ma perché Malebolge inver’ la porta
del bassissimo pozzo tutta pende,
lo sito di ciascuna valle porta 39

che l’una costa surge e l’altra scende;
noi pur venimmo al fine in su la punta
onde l’ultima pietra si scoscende. 42

La lena m’era del polmon sì munta
quand’io fui sù, ch’i’ non potea più oltre,
anzi m’assisi ne la prima giunta. 45

“Omai convien che tu così ti spoltre”,
disse ‘l maestro; “ché, seggendo in piuma,
in fama non si vien, né sotto coltre; 48

sanza la qual chi sua vita consuma,
cotal vestigio in terra di sé lascia,
qual fummo in aere e in acqua la schiuma. 51

E però leva sù; vinci l’ambascia
con l’animo che vince ogne battaglia,
se col suo grave corpo non s’accascia. 54

Più lunga scala convien che si saglia;
non basta da costoro esser partito.
Se tu mi ‘ntendi, or fa sì che ti vaglia”.

Leva’ mi allor, mostrandomi fornito
meglio di lena ch’i’ non mi sentia,
e dissi: “Va, ch’i’ son forte e ardito”.

Su per lo scoglio prendemmo la via,
ch’era ronchioso, stretto e malagevole,
ed erto più assai che quel di pria.

Parlando andava per non parer fievole;
onde una voce uscì de l’altro fosso,
a parole formar disconvenevole.

Non so che disse, ancor che sovra ‘l dosso
fossi de l’arco già che varca quivi;
ma chi parlava ad ire parea mosso.

Io era vòlto in giù, ma li occhi vivi
non poteano ire al fondo per lo scuro;
per ch’io: “Maestro, fa che tu arrivi

da l’altro cinghio e dismontiam lo muro;
ché, com’i’ odo quinci e non intendo,
così giù veggio e neente affiguro”.

“Altra risposta”, disse, “non ti rendo
se non lo far; ché la dimanda onesta
si de’ seguir con l’opera tacendo”.

Noi discendemmo il ponte da la testa
dove s’aggiugne con l’ottava ripa,
e poi mi fu la bolgia manifesta:

e vidivi entro terribile stipa
di serpenti, e di sì diversa mena
che la memoria il sangue ancor mi scipa.

Più non si vanti Libia con sua rena;
ché se chelidri, iaculi e faree
produce, e cencri con anfisibena,

né tante pestilenzie né sì ree
mostrò già mai con tutta l'Etïopia
né con ciò che di sopra al Mar Rosso èe.

Tra questa cruda e tristissima copia
corrëan genti nude e spaventate,
sanza sperar pertugio o elitropia:

con serpi le man dietro avean legate;
quelle ficcavan per le ren la coda
e 'l capo, ed eran dinanzi aggroppate.

Ed ecco a un ch'era da nostra proda,
s'avventò un serpente che 'l trafisse
là dove 'l collo a le spalle s'annoda.

Né O sì tosto mai né I si scrisse,
com'el s'accese e arse, e cener tutto
convenne che cascando divenisse;

e poi che fu a terra sì distrutto,
la polver si raccolse per sé stessa
e 'n quel medesmo ritornò di butto.

Così per li gran savi si confessa
che la fenice more e poi rinasce,
quando al cinquecentesimo anno appressa;

erba né biado in sua vita non pasce,
ma sol d'incenso lagrime e d'amomo,
e nardo e mirra son l'ultime fasce.

E qual è quel che cade, e non sa como,
per forza di demon ch'a terra il tira,
o d'altra oppilazion che lega l'omo,

quando si leva, che ‘ntorno si mira
tutto smarrito de la grande angoscia
ch’elli ha sofferta, e guardando sospira:

tal era ‘l peccator levato poscia.
Oh potenza di Dio, quant’è severa,
che cotai colpi per vendetta croscia!

Lo duca il domandò poi chi ello era;
per ch’ei rispuose: “Io piovvi di Toscana,
poco tempo è, in questa gola fiera.

Vita bestial mi piacque e non umana,
sì come a mul ch’i’ fui; son Vanni Fucci
bestia, e Pistoia mi fu degna tana”.

E ïo al duca: “Dilli che non mucci,
e domanda che colpa qua giù ‘l pinse;
ch’io ‘l vidi omo di sangue e di crucci”.

E ‘l peccator, che ‘ntese, non s’infinse,
ma drizzò verso me l’animo e ‘l volto,
e di trista vergogna si dipinse;

poi disse: “Più mi duol che tu m’ hai colto
ne la miseria dove tu mi vedi,
che quando fui de l’altra vita tolto.

Io non posso negar quel che tu chiedi;
in giù son messo tanto perch’io fui
ladro a la sagrestia d’i belli arredi,

e falsamente già fu apposto altrui.
Ma perché di tal vista tu non godi,
se mai sarai di fuor da’ luoghi bui,

apri li orecchi al mio annunzio, e odi.
Pistoia in pria d’i Neri si dimagra;
poi Fiorenza rinova gente e modi.

Tragge Marte vapor di Val di Magra
ch’è di torbidi nuvoli involuto;
e con tempesta impetüosa e agra

sovra Campo Picen fia combattuto;
ond’ei repente spezzerà la nebbia,
sì ch’ogne Bianco ne sarà feruto.

E detto l’ ho perché doler ti debbia!”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto venticinquesimo

Canto XXV, dove si tratta di quella medesima materia che detta è nel capitolo dinanzi a questo, e tratta contr' a' fiorentini, ma in prima sgrida contro a la città di Pistoia; ed è quella medesima bolgia.

Al fine de le sue parole il ladro
le mani alzò con amendue le fiche,
gridando: "Togli, Dio, ch'a te le squadro!". 3

Da indi in qua mi fuor le serpi amiche,
perch'una li s'avvolse allora al collo,
come dicesse 'Non vo' che più diche'; 6

e un'altra a le braccia, e rilegollo,
ribadendo sé stessa sì dinanzi,
che non potea con esse dare un crollo. 9

Ahi Pistoia, Pistoia, ché non stanzi
d'incenerarti sì che più non duri,
poi che 'n mal fare il seme tuo avanzi? 12

Per tutt'i cerchi de lo 'nferno scuri
non vidi spirto in Dio tanto superbo,
non quel che cadde a Tebe giù da' muri. 15

El si fuggì che non parlò più verbo;
e io vidi un centauro pien di rabbia
venir chiamando: "Ov'è, ov'è l'acerbo?". 18

Maremma non cred'io che tante n'abbia,
quante bisce elli avea su per la groppa
infin ove comincia nostra labbia. 21

Sovra le spalle, dietro da la coppa,
con l'ali aperte li giacea un draco;
e quello affuoca qualunque s'intoppa. 24

Lo mio maestro disse: “Questi è Caco,
che, sotto ‘l sasso di monte Aventino,
di sangue fece spesse volte laco.

Non va co’ suoi fratei per un cammino,
per lo furto che frodolente fece
del grande armento ch’elli ebbe a vicino;

onde cessar le sue opere biece
sotto la mazza d’Ercule, che forse
gliene diè cento, e non sentì le diece”.

Mentre che sì parlava, ed el trascorse,
e tre spiriti venner sotto noi,
de’ quai né io né ‘l duca mio s’accorse,

se non quando gridar: “Chi siete voi?”;
per che nostra novella si ristette,
e intendemmo pur ad essi poi.

Io non li conoscea; ma ei seguette,
come suol seguitar per alcun caso,
che l’un nomar un altro convenette,

dicendo: “Cianfa dove fia rimaso?”;
per ch’io, acciò che ‘l duca stesse attento,
mi puosi ‘l dito su dal mento al naso.

Se tu se’ or, lettore, a creder lento
ciò ch’io dirò, non sarà maraviglia,
ché io che ‘l vidi, a pena il mi consento.

Com’io tenea levate in lor le ciglia,
e un serpente con sei piè si lancia
dinanzi a l’uno, e tutto a lui s’appiglia.

Co’ piè di mezzo li avvinse la pancia
e con li anterïor le braccia prese;
poi li addentò e l’una e l’altra guancia;

li diretani a le cosce distese,
e miseli la coda tra ‘mbedue
e dietro per le ren sù la ritese.

Ellera abbarbicata mai non fue
ad alber sì, come l’orribil fiera
per l’altrui membra avviticchiò le sue.

Poi s’appiccar, come di calda cera
fossero stati, e mischiar lor colore,
né l’un né l’altro già parea quel ch’era:

come procede innanzi da l’ardore,
per lo papiro suso, un color bruno
che non è nero ancora e ‘l bianco more.

Li altri due ‘l riguardavano, e ciascuno
gridava: “Omè, Agnel, come ti muti!
Vedi che già non se’ né due né uno”.

Già eran li due capi un divenuti,
quando n’apparver due figure miste
in una faccia, ov’eran due perduti.

Fersi le braccia due di quattro liste;
le cosce con le gambe e ‘l ventre e ‘l casso
divenner membra che non fuor mai viste.

Ogne primaio aspetto ivi era casso:
due e nessun l’imagine perversa
parea; e tal sen gio con lento passo.

Come ‘l ramarro sotto la gran fersa
dei dì canicular, cangiando sepe,
folgore par se la via attraversa,

sì pareva, venendo verso l’epe
de li altri due, un serpentello acceso,
livido e nero come gran di pepe;

e quella parte onde prima è preso
nostro alimento, a l’un di lor trafisse;
poi cadde giuso innanzi lui disteso.

Lo trafitto ‘l mirò, ma nulla disse;
anzi, co’ piè fermati, sbadigliava
pur come sonno o febbre l’assalisse.

Elli ‘l serpente e quei lui riguardava;
l’un per la piaga e l’altro per la bocca
fummavan forte, e ‘l fummo si scontrava.

Taccia Lucano omai là dov’e’ tocca
del misero Sabello e di Nasidio,
e attenda a udir quel ch’or si scocca.

Taccia di Cadmo e d’Aretusa Ovidio,
ché se quello in serpente e quella in fonte
converte poetando, io non lo ‘nvidio;

ché due nature mai a fronte a fronte
non trasmutò sì ch’amendue le forme
a cambiar lor matera fosser pronte.

Insieme si rispuosero a tai norme,
che ‘l serpente la coda in forca fesse,
e ‘l feruto ristrinse insieme l’orme.

Le gambe con le cosce seco stesse
s’appiccar sì, che ‘n poco la giuntura
non facea segno alcun che si paresse.

Togliea la coda fessa la figura
che si perdeva là, e la sua pelle
si facea molle, e quella di là dura.

Io vidi intrar le braccia per l’ascelle,
e i due piè de la fiera, ch’eran corti,
tanto allungar quanto accorciavan quelle.

Poscia li piè di rietro, insieme attorti,
diventaron lo membro che l'uom cela,
e 'l misero del suo n'avea due porti.

Mentre che 'l fummo l'uno e l'altro vela
di color novo, e genera 'l pel suso
per l'una parte e da l'altra il dipela,

l'un si levò e l'altro cadde giuso,
non torcendo però le lucerne empie,
sotto le quai ciascun cambiava muso.

Quel ch'era dritto, il trasse ver' le tempie,
e di troppa matera ch'in là venne
uscir li orecchi de le gote scempie;

ciò che non corse in dietro e si ritenne
di quel soverchio, fé naso a la faccia
e le labbra ingrossò quanto convenne.

Quel che giacëa, il muso innanzi caccia,
e li orecchi ritira per la testa
come face le corna la lumaccia;

e la lingua, ch'avëa unita e presta
prima a parlar, si fende, e la forcuta
ne l'altro si richiude; e 'l fummo resta.

L'anima ch'era fiera divenuta,
suffolando si fugge per la valle,
e l'altro dietro a lui parlando sputa.

Poscia li volse le novelle spalle,
e disse a l'altro: "I' vo' che Buoso corra,
com' ho fatt'io, carpon per questo calle".

Così vid'io la settima zavorra
mutare e trasmutare; e qui mi scusi
la novità se fior la penna abborra.

E avvegna che li occhi miei confusi
fossero alquanto e l’animo smagato,
non poter quei fuggirsi tanto chiusi,

ch’i’ non scorgessi ben Puccio Sciancato;
ed era quel che sol, di tre compagni
che venner prima, non era mutato;

l’altr’era quel che tu, Gaville, piagni.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiseiesimo

Canto XXVI, nel quale si tratta de l'ottava bolgia contro a quelli che mettono aguati e danno frodolenti consigli; e in prima sgrida contro a' fiorentini e tacitamente predice del futuro e in persona d'Ulisse e Diomedes pone loro pene.

Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!

Tra li ladron trovai cinque cotali
tuoi cittadini onde mi ven vergogna,
e tu in grande orranza non ne sali.

Ma se presso al mattin del ver si sogna,
tu sentirai, di qua da picciol tempo,
di quel che Prato, non ch'altri, t'agogna.

E se già fosse, non saria per tempo.
Così foss'ei, da che pur esser dee!
ché più mi graverà, com' più m'attempo.

Noi ci partimmo, e su per le scalee
che n'avea fatto iborni a scender pria,
rimontò 'l duca mio e trasse mee;

e proseguendo la solinga via,
tra le schegge e tra ' rocchi de lo scoglio
lo piè sanza la man non si spedia.

Allor mi dolsi, e ora mi ridoglio
quando drizzo la mente a ciò ch'io vidi,
e più lo 'ngegno affreno ch'i' non soglio,

perché non corra che virtù nol guidi;
sì che, se stella bona o miglior cosa
m' ha dato 'l ben, ch'io stessi nol m'invidi.

Quante ‘l villan ch’al poggio si riposa,
nel tempo che colui che ‘l mondo schiara
la faccia sua a noi tien meno ascosa,

come la mosca cede a la zanzara,
vede lucciole giù per la vallea,
forse colà dov’e’ vendemmia e ara:

di tante fiamme tutta risplendea
l’ottava bolgia, sì com’io m’accorsi
tosto che fui là ‘ve ‘l fondo parea.

E qual colui che si vengiò con li orsi
vide ‘l carro d’Elia al dipartire,
quando i cavalli al cielo erti levorsi,

che nol potea sì con li occhi seguire,
ch’el vedesse altro che la fiamma sola,
sì come nuvoletta, in sù salire:

tal si move ciascuna per la gola
del fosso, ché nessuna mostra ‘l furto,
e ogne fiamma un peccatore invola.

Io stava sovra ‘l ponte a veder surto,
sì che s’io non avessi un ronchion preso,
caduto sarei giù sanz’esser urto.

E ‘l duca, che mi vide tanto atteso,
disse: “Dentro dai fuochi son li spirti;
catun si fascia di quel ch’elli è inceso”.

“Maestro mio”, rispuos’io, “per udirti
son io più certo; ma già m’era avviso
che così fosse, e già voleva dirti:

chi è ‘n quel foco che vien sì diviso
di sopra, che par surger de la pira
dov’Eteòcle col fratel fu miso?”.

Rispuose a me: “Là dentro si martira
Ulisse e Dïomede, e così insieme
a la vendetta vanno come a l’ira;

e dentro da la lor fiamma si geme
l’agguato del caval che fé la porta
onde uscì de’ Romani il gentil seme.

Piangevisi entro l’arte per che, morta,
Deïdamìa ancor si duol d’Achille,
e del Palladio pena vi si porta”.

“S’ei posson dentro da quelle faville
parlar”, diss’io, “maestro, assai ten priego
e ripriego, che ‘l priego vaglia mille,

che non mi facci de l’attender niego
fin che la fiamma cornuta qua vegna;
vedi che del disio ver’ lei mi piego!”.

Ed elli a me: “La tua preghiera è degna
di molta loda, e io però l’accetto;
ma fa che la tua lingua si sostegna.

Lascia parlare a me, ch’i’ ho concetto
ciò che tu vuoi; ch’ei sarebbero schivi,
perch’e’ fuor greci, forse del tuo detto”.

Poi che la fiamma fu venuta quivi
dove parve al mio duca tempo e loco,
in questa forma lui parlare audivi:

“O voi che siete due dentro ad un foco,
s’io meritai di voi mentre ch’io vissi,
s’io meritai di voi assai o poco

quando nel mondo li alti versi scrissi,
non vi movete; ma l’un di voi dica
dove, per lui, perduto a morir gissi”.

Lo maggior corno de la fiamma antica
cominciò a crollarsi mormorando,
pur come quella cui vento affatica;

indi la cima qua e là menando,
come fosse la lingua che parlasse,
gittò voce di fuori e disse: “Quando

mi diparti’ da Circe, che sottrasse
me più d’un anno là presso a Gaeta,
prima che sì Enëa la nomasse,

né dolcezza di figlio, né la pieta
del vecchio padre, né ‘l debito amore
lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,

vincer potero dentro a me l’ardore
ch’i’ ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto
e de li vizi umani e del valore;

ma misi me per l’alto mare aperto
sol con un legno e con quella compagna
picciola da la qual non fui diserto.

L’un lito e l’altro vidi infin la Spagna,
fin nel Morrocco, e l’isola d’i Sardi,
e l’altre che quel mare intorno bagna.

Io e’ compagni eravam vecchi e tardi
quando venimmo a quella foce stretta
dov’Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi

acciò che l’uom più oltre non si metta;
da la man destra mi lasciai Sibilia,
da l’altra già m’avea lasciata Setta.

“O frati,” dissi, “che per cento milia
perigli siete giunti a l’occidente,
a questa tanto picciola vigilia

d’i nostri sensi ch’è del rimanente
non vogliate negar l’esperïenza,
di retro al sol, del mondo sanza gente.

Considerate la vostra semenza:
fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza”.

Li miei compagni fec’io sì aguti,
con questa orazion picciola, al cammino,
che a pena poscia li avrei ritenuti;

e volta nostra poppa nel mattino,
de’ remi facemmo ali al folle volo,
sempre acquistando dal lato mancino.

Tutte le stelle già de l’altro polo
vedea la notte, e ‘l nostro tanto basso,
che non surgëa fuor del marin suolo.

Cinque volte racceso e tante casso
lo lume era di sotto da la luna,
poi che ‘ntrati eravam ne l’alto passo,

quando n’apparve una montagna, bruna
per la distanza, e parvemi alta tanto
quanto veduta non avëa alcuna.

Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto;
ché de la nova terra un turbo nacque
e percosse del legno il primo canto.

Tre volte il fé girar con tutte l’acque;
a la quarta levar la poppa in suso
e la prora ire in giù, com’altrui piacque,

infin che ‘l mar fu sovra noi richiuso”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventisettesimo

Canto XXVII, dove tratta di que' medesimi aguatatori e falsi consiglieri d'inganni in persona del conte Guido da Montefeltro.

Già era dritta in sù la fiamma e queta
per non dir più, e già da noi sen gia
con la licenza del dolce poeta,

quand'un'altra, che dietro a lei venìa,
ne fece volger li occhi a la sua cima
per un confuso suon che fuor n'uscia.

Come 'l bue cicilian che mugghiò prima
col pianto di colui, e ciò fu dritto,
che l'avea temperato con sua lima,

mugghiava con la voce de l'afflitto,
sì che, con tutto che fosse di rame,
pur el pareva dal dolor trafitto;

così, per non aver via né forame
dal principio nel foco, in suo linguaggio
si convertïan le parole grame.

Ma poscia ch'ebber colto lor vïaggio
su per la punta, dandole quel guizzo
che dato avea la lingua in lor passaggio,

udimmo dire: "O tu a cu' io drizzo
la voce e che parlavi mo lombardo,
dicendo "Istra ten va, più non t'adizzo",

perch'io sia giunto forse alquanto tardo,
non t'incresca restare a parlar meco;
vedi che non incresce a me, e ardo!

Se tu pur mo in questo mondo cieco
caduto se' di quella dolce terra

latina ond’io mia colpa tutta reco, 27

dimmi se Romagnuoli han pace o guerra;
ch’io fui d’i monti là intra Orbino
e ‘l giogo di che Tever si diserra”. 30

Io era in giuso ancora attento e chino,
quando il mio duca mi tentò di costa,
dicendo: “Parla tu; questi è latino”. 33

E io, ch’avea già pronta la risposta,
sanza indugio a parlare incominciai:
“O anima che se’ là giù nascosta, 36

Romagna tua non è, e non fu mai,
sanza guerra ne’ cuor de’ suoi tiranni;
ma ‘n palese nessuna or vi lasciai. 39

Ravenna sta come stata è molt’anni:
l’aguglia da Polenta la si cova,
sì che Cervia ricuopre co’ suoi vanni. 42

La terra che fé già la lunga prova
e di Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio,
sotto le branche verdi si ritrova. 45

E ‘l mastin vecchio e ‘l nuovo da Verrucchio,
che fecer di Montagna il mal governo,
là dove soglion fan d’i denti succhio. 48

Le città di Lamone e di Santerno
conduce il lïoncel dal nido bianco,
che muta parte da la state al verno. 51

E quella cu’ il Savio bagna il fianco,
così com’ella sie’ tra ‘l piano e ‘l monte,
tra tirannia si vive e stato franco. 54

Ora chi se’, ti priego che ne conte;
non esser duro più ch’altri sia stato,

se ‘l nome tuo nel mondo tegna fronte”. 57

Poscia che ‘l foco alquanto ebbe rugghiato
al modo suo, l’aguta punta mosse
di qua, di là, e poi diè cotal fiato: 60

“S’i’ credesse che mia risposta fosse
a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
questa fiamma staria sanza più scosse; 63

ma però che già mai di questo fondo
non tornò vivo alcun, s’i’ odo il vero,
sanza tema d’infamia ti rispondo. 66

Io fui uom d’arme, e poi fui cordigliero,
credendomi, sì cinto, fare ammenda;
e certo il creder mio venìa intero, 69

se non fosse il gran prete, a cui mal prenda!,
che mi rimise ne le prime colpe;
e come e quare, voglio che m’intenda. 72

Mentre ch’io forma fui d’ossa e di polpe
che la madre mi diè, l’opere mie
non furon leonine, ma di volpe. 75

Li accorgimenti e le coperte vie
io seppi tutte, e sì menai lor arte,
ch’al fine de la terra il suono uscie. 78

Quando mi vidi giunto in quella parte
di mia etade ove ciascun dovrebbe
calar le vele e raccoglier le sarte, 81

ciò che pria mi piacëa, allor m’increbbe,
e pentuto e confesso mi rendei;
ahi miser lasso! e giovato sarebbe. 84

Lo principe d’i novi Farisei,
avendo guerra presso a Laterano,

e non con Saracin né con Giudei,

ché ciascun suo nimico era cristiano,
e nessun era stato a vincer Acri
né mercatante in terra di Soldano,

né sommo officio né ordini sacri
guardò in sé, né in me quel capestro
che solea fare i suoi cinti più macri.

Ma come Costantin chiese Silvestro
d'entro Siratti a guerir de la lebbre,
così mi chiese questi per maestro

a guerir de la sua superba febbre;
domandommi consiglio, e io tacetti
perché le sue parole parver ebbre.

E' poi ridisse: "Tuo cuor non sospetti;
finor t'assolvo, e tu m'insegna fare
sì come Penestrino in terra getti.

Lo ciel poss'io serrare e diserrare,
come tu sai; però son due le chiavi
che 'l mio antecessor non ebbe care".

Allor mi pinser li argomenti gravi
là 've 'l tacer mi fu avviso 'l peggio,
e dissi: "Padre, da che tu mi lavi

di quel peccato ov'io mo cader deggio,
lunga promessa con l'attender corto
ti farà trïunfar ne l'alto seggio".

Francesco venne poi, com'io fu' morto,
per me; ma un d'i neri cherubini
li disse: "Non portar; non mi far torto.

Venir se ne dee giù tra ' miei meschini
perché diede 'l consiglio frodolente,

dal quale in qua stato li sono a’ crini;

ch’assolver non si può chi non si pente,
né pentere e volere insieme puossi
per la contradizion che nol consente”.

Oh me dolente! come mi riscossi
quando mi prese dicendomi: “Forse
tu non pensavi ch’io löico fossi!”.

A Minòs mi portò; e quelli attorse
otto volte la coda al dosso duro;
e poi che per gran rabbia la si morse,

disse: “Questi è d’i rei del foco furo”;
per ch’io là dove vedi son perduto,
e sì vestito, andando, mi rancuro”.

Quand’elli ebbe ‘l suo dir così compiuto,
la fiamma dolorando si partio,
torcendo e dibattendo ‘l corno aguto.

Noi passamm’oltre, e io e ‘l duca mio,
su per lo scoglio infino in su l’altr’arco
che cuopre ‘l fosso in che si paga il fio

a quei che scommettendo acquistan carco.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventottesimo

Canto XXVIII, nel quale tratta le qualitadi de la nona bolgia, dove l'auttore vide punire coloro che commisero scandali, e' seminatori di scisma e discordia e d'ogne altro male operare.

Chi poria mai pur con parole sciolte
dicer del sangue e de le piaghe a pieno
ch'i' ora vidi, per narrar più volte?

Ogne lingua per certo verria meno
per lo nostro sermone e per la mente
c' hanno a tanto comprender poco seno.

S'el s'aunasse ancor tutta la gente
che già, in su la fortunata terra
di Puglia, fu del suo sangue dolente

per li Troiani e per la lunga guerra
che de l'anella fé sì alte spoglie,
come Livïo scrive, che non erra,

con quella che sentio di colpi doglie
per contastare a Ruberto Guiscardo;
e l'altra il cui ossame ancor s'accoglie

a Ceperan, là dove fu bugiardo
ciascun Pugliese, e là da Tagliacozzo,
dove sanz'arme vinse il vecchio Alardo;

e qual forato suo membro e qual mozzo
mostrasse, d'aequar sarebbe nulla
il modo de la nona bolgia sozzo.

Già veggia, per mezzul perdere o lulla,
com'io vidi un, così non si pertugia,
rotto dal mento infin dove si trulla.

Tra le gambe pendevan le minugia;
la corata pareva e ‘l tristo sacco
che merda fa di quel che si trangugia. 27

Mentre che tutto in lui veder m’attacco,
guardommi e con le man s’aperse il petto,
dicendo: “Or vedi com’io mi dilacco! 30

vedi come storpiato è Mäometto!
Dinanzi a me sen va piangendo Alì,
fesso nel volto dal mento al ciuffetto. 33

E tutti li altri che tu vedi qui,
seminator di scandalo e di scisma
fuor vivi, e però son fessi così. 36

Un diavolo è qua dietro che n’accisma
sì crudelmente, al taglio de la spada
rimettendo ciascun di questa risma, 39

quand’avem volta la dolente strada;
però che le ferite son richiuse
prima ch’altri dinanzi li rivada. 42

Ma tu chi se’ che ‘n su lo scoglio muse,
forse per indugiar d’ire a la pena
ch’è giudicata in su le tue accuse?”. 45

“Né morte ‘l giunse ancor, né colpa ‘l mena”,
rispuose ‘l mio maestro, “a tormentarlo;
ma per dar lui esperïenza piena, 48

a me, che morto son, convien menarlo
per lo ‘nferno qua giù di giro in giro;
e quest’è ver così com’io ti parlo”. 51

Più fuor di cento che, quando l’udiro,
s’arrestaron nel fosso a riguardarmi
per maraviglia, oblïando il martiro. 54

“Or dì a fra Dolcin dunque che s’armi,
tu che forse vedra’ il sole in breve,
s’ello non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,

sì di vivanda, che stretta di neve
non rechi la vittoria al Noarese,
ch’altrimenti acquistar non saria leve”.

Poi che l’un piè per girsene sospese,
Mäometto mi disse esta parola;
indi a partirsi in terra lo distese.

Un altro, che forata avea la gola
e tronco ‘l naso infin sotto le ciglia,
e non avea mai ch’una orecchia sola,

ristato a riguardar per maraviglia
con li altri, innanzi a li altri aprì la canna,
ch’era di fuor d’ogne parte vermiglia,

e disse: “O tu cui colpa non condanna
e cu’ io vidi in su terra latina,
se troppa simiglianza non m’inganna,

rimembriti di Pier da Medicina,
se mai torni a veder lo dolce piano
che da Vercelli a Marcabò dichina.

E fa sapere a’ due miglior da Fano,
a messer Guido e anco ad Angiolello,
che, se l’antiveder qui non è vano,

gittati saran fuor di lor vasello
e mazzerati presso a la Cattolica
per tradimento d’un tiranno fello.

Tra l’isola di Cipri e di Maiolica
non vide mai sì gran fallo Nettuno,
non da pirate, non da gente argolica.

Quel traditor che vede pur con l’uno,
e tien la terra che tale qui meco
vorrebbe di vedere esser digiuno,

farà venirli a parlamento seco;
poi farà sì, ch’al vento di Focara
non sarà lor mestier voto né preco”.

E io a lui: “Dimostrami e dichiara,
se vuo’ ch’i’ porti sù di te novella,
chi è colui da la veduta amara”.

Allor puose la mano a la mascella
d’un suo compagno e la bocca li aperse,
gridando: “Questi è desso, e non favella.

Questi, scacciato, il dubitar sommerse
in Cesare, affermando che ‘l fornito
sempre con danno l’attender sofferse”.

Oh quanto mi pareva sbigottito
con la lingua tagliata ne la strozza
Curïo, ch’a dir fu così ardito!

E un ch’avea l’una e l’altra man mozza,
levando i moncherin per l’aura fosca,
sì che ‘l sangue facea la faccia sozza,

gridò: “Ricordera’ ti anche del Mosca,
che disse, lasso!, ‘Capo ha cosa fatta’,
che fu mal seme per la gente tosca”.

E io li aggiunsi: “E morte di tua schiatta”;
per ch’elli, accumulando duol con duolo,
sen gio come persona trista e matta.

Ma io rimasi a riguardar lo stuolo,
e vidi cosa ch’io avrei paura,
sanza più prova, di contarla solo;

se non che coscïenza m’assicura,
la buona compagnia che l’uom francheggia
sotto l’asbergo del sentirsi pura.

Io vidi certo, e ancor par ch’io ‘l veggia,
un busto sanza capo andar sì come
andavan li altri de la trista greggia;

e ‘l capo tronco tenea per le chiome,
pesol con mano a guisa di lanterna:
e quel mirava noi e dicea: “Oh me!”.

Di sé facea a sé stesso lucerna,
ed eran due in uno e uno in due;
com’esser può, quei sa che sì governa.

Quando diritto al piè del ponte fue,
levò ‘l braccio alto con tutta la testa
per appressarne le parole sue,

che fuoro: “Or vedi la pena molesta,
tu che, spirando, vai veggendo i morti:
vedi s’alcuna è grande come questa.

E perché tu di me novella porti,
sappi ch’i’ son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli
che diedi al re giovane i ma’ conforti.

Io feci il padre e ‘l figlio in sé ribelli;
Achitofèl non fé più d’Absalone
e di Davìd coi malvagi punzelli.

Perch’io parti’ così giunte persone,
partito porto il mio cerebro, lasso!,
dal suo principio ch’è in questo troncone.

Così s’osserva in me lo contrapasso”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventinovesimo

Canto XXIX, ove tratta de la decima bolgia, dove si puniscono i falsi fabricatori di qualunque opera, e isgrida e riprende l'autore i Sanesi.

La molta gente e le diverse piaghe
avean le luci mie sì inebrïate,
che de lo stare a piangere eran vaghe.

Ma Virgilio mi disse: "Che pur guate?
perché la vista tua pur si soffolge
là giù tra l'ombre triste smozzicate?

Tu non hai fatto sì a l'altre bolge;
pensa, se tu annoverar le credi,
che miglia ventidue la valle volge.

E già la luna è sotto i nostri piedi;
lo tempo è poco omai che n'è concesso,
e altro è da veder che tu non vedi".

"Se tu avessi", rispuos'io appresso,
"atteso a la cagion per ch'io guardava,
forse m'avresti ancor lo star dimesso".

Parte sen giva, e io retro li andava,
lo duca, già faccendo la risposta,
e soggiugnendo: "Dentro a quella cava

dov'io tenea or li occhi sì a posta,
credo ch'un spirto del mio sangue pianga
la colpa che là giù cotanto costa".

Allor disse 'l maestro: "Non si franga
lo tuo pensier da qui innanzi sovr'ello.
Attendi ad altro, ed ei là si rimanga;

ch'io vidi lui a piè del ponticello
mostrarti e minacciar forte col dito,

e udi' 'l nominar Geri del Bello.

Tu eri allor sì del tutto impedito
sovra colui che già tenne Altaforte,
che non guardasti in là, sì fu partito".

"O duca mio, la vïolenta morte
che non li è vendicata ancor", diss'io,
"per alcun che de l'onta sia consorte,

fece lui disdegnoso; ond'el sen gio
sanza parlarmi, sì com'ïo estimo:
e in ciò m' ha el fatto a sé più pio".

Così parlammo infino al loco primo
che de lo scoglio l'altra valle mostra,
se più lume vi fosse, tutto ad imo.

Quando noi fummo sor l'ultima chiostra
di Malebolge, sì che i suoi conversi
potean parere a la veduta nostra,

lamenti saettaron me diversi,
che di pietà ferrati avean li strali;
ond'io li orecchi con le man copersi.

Qual dolor fora, se de li spedali
di Valdichiana tra 'l luglio e 'l settembre
e di Maremma e di Sardigna i mali

fossero in una fossa tutti 'nsembre,
tal era quivi, e tal puzzo n'usciva
qual suol venir de le marcite membre.

Noi discendemmo in su l'ultima riva
del lungo scoglio, pur da man sinistra;
e allor fu la mia vista più viva

giù ver' lo fondo, là 've la ministra
de l'alto Sire infallibil giustizia

punisce i falsador che qui registra.

Non credo ch'a veder maggior tristizia
fosse in Egina il popol tutto infermo,
quando fu l'aere sì pien di malizia,

che li animali, infino al picciol vermo,
cascaron tutti, e poi le genti antiche,
secondo che i poeti hanno per fermo,

si ristorar di seme di formiche;
ch'era a veder per quella oscura valle
languir li spirti per diverse biche.

Qual sovra 'l ventre e qual sovra le spalle
l'un de l'altro giacea, e qual carpone
si trasmutava per lo tristo calle.

Passo passo andavam sanza sermone,
guardando e ascoltando li ammalati,
che non potean levar le lor persone.

Io vidi due sedere a sé poggiati,
com'a scaldar si poggia tegghia a tegghia,
dal capo al piè di schianze macolati;

e non vidi già mai menare stregghia
a ragazzo aspettato dal segnorso,
né a colui che mal volontier vegghia,

come ciascun menava spesso il morso
de l'unghie sopra sé per la gran rabbia
del pizzicor, che non ha più soccorso;

e sì traevan giù l'unghie la scabbia,
come coltel di scardova le scaglie
o d'altro pesce che più larghe l'abbia.

"O tu che con le dita ti dismaglie",
cominciò 'l duca mio a l'un di loro,

“e che fai d’esse talvolta tanaglie,

dinne s’alcun Latino è tra costoro
che son quinc’entro, se l’unghia ti basti
etternalmente a cotesto lavoro”.

“Latin siam noi, che tu vedi sì guasti
qui ambedue”, rispuose l’un piangendo;
“ma tu chi se’ che di noi dimandasti?”.

E ‘l duca disse: “I’ son un che discendo
con questo vivo giù di balzo in balzo,
e di mostrar lo ‘nferno a lui intendo”.

Allor si ruppe lo comun rincalzo;
e tremando ciascuno a me si volse
con altri che l’udiron di rimbalzo.

Lo buon maestro a me tutto s’accolse,
dicendo: “Dì a lor ciò che tu vuoli”;
e io incominciai, poscia ch’ei volse:

“Se la vostra memoria non s’imboli
nel primo mondo da l’umane menti,
ma s’ella viva sotto molti soli,

ditemi chi voi siete e di che genti;
la vostra sconcia e fastidiosa pena
di palesarvi a me non vi spaventi”.

“Io fui d’Arezzo, e Albero da Siena”,
rispuose l’un, “mi fé mettere al foco;
ma quel per ch’io mori’ qui non mi mena.

Vero è ch’i’ dissi lui, parlando a gioco:
“I’ mi saprei levar per l’aere a volo”;
e quei, ch’avea vaghezza e senno poco,

volle ch’i’ li mostrassi l’arte; e solo
perch’io nol feci Dedalo, mi fece

ardere a tal che l’avea per figliuolo.

Ma ne l’ultima bolgia de le diece
me per l’alchìmia che nel mondo usai
dannò Minòs, a cui fallar non lece”.

E io dissi al poeta: “Or fu già mai
gente sì vana come la sanese?
Certo non la francesca sì d’assai!”.

Onde l’altro lebbroso, che m’intese,
rispuose al detto mio: “Tra’ mene Stricca
che seppe far le temperate spese,

e Niccolò che la costuma ricca
del garofano prima discoverse
ne l’orto dove tal seme s’appicca;

e tra’ ne la brigata in che disperse
Caccia d’Ascian la vigna e la gran fonda,
e l’Abbagliato suo senno proferse.

Ma perché sappi chi sì ti seconda
contra i Sanesi, aguzza ver’ me l’occhio,
sì che la faccia mia ben ti risponda:

sì vedrai ch’io son l’ombra di Capocchio,
che falsai li metalli con l’alchìmia;
e te dee ricordar, se ben t’adocchio,

com’io fui di natura buona scimia”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentesimo

Canto XXX, ove tratta di quella medesima materia e gente.

Nel tempo che Iunone era crucciata
per Semelè contra ‘l sangue tebano,
come mostrò una e altra fïata,

Atamante divenne tanto insano,
che veggendo la moglie con due figli
andar carcata da ciascuna mano,

gridò: “Tendiam le reti, sì ch’io pigli
la leonessa e ‘ leoncini al varco”;
e poi distese i dispietati artigli,

prendendo l’un ch’avea nome Learco,
e rotollo e percosselo ad un sasso;
e quella s’annegò con l’altro carco.

E quando la fortuna volse in basso
l’altezza de’ Troian che tutto ardiva,
sì che ‘nsieme col regno il re fu casso,

Ecuba trista, misera e cattiva,
poscia che vide Polissena morta,
e del suo Polidoro in su la riva

del mar si fu la dolorosa accorta,
forsennata latrò sì come cane;
tanto il dolor le fé la mente torta.

Ma né di Tebe furie né troiane
si vider mäi in alcun tanto crude,
non punger bestie, nonché membra umane,

quant’io vidi in due ombre smorte e nude,
che mordendo correvan di quel modo
che ‘l porco quando del porcil si schiude.

L’una giunse a Capocchio, e in sul nodo
del collo l’assannò, sì che, tirando,
grattar li fece il ventre al fondo sodo.

E l’Aretin che rimase, tremando
mi disse: “Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi,
e va rabbioso altrui così conciando”.

“Oh”, diss’io lui, “se l’altro non ti ficchi
li denti a dosso, non ti sia fatica
a dir chi è, pria che di qui si spicchi”.

Ed elli a me: “Quell’è l’anima antica
di Mirra scellerata, che divenne
al padre, fuor del dritto amore, amica.

Questa a peccar con esso così venne,
falsificando sé in altrui forma,
come l’altro che là sen va, sostenne,

per guadagnar la donna de la torma,
falsificare in sé Buoso Donati,
testando e dando al testamento norma”.

E poi che i due rabbiosi fuor passati
sovra cu’ io avea l’occhio tenuto,
rivolsilo a guardar li altri mal nati.

Io vidi un, fatto a guisa di lëuto,
pur ch’elli avesse avuta l’anguinaia
tronca da l’altro che l’uomo ha forcuto.

La grave idropesì, che sì dispaia
le membra con l’omor che mal converte,
che ‘l viso non risponde a la ventraia,

faceva lui tener le labbra aperte
come l’etico fa, che per la sete
l’un verso ‘l mento e l’altro in sù rinverte.

“O voi che sanz’alcuna pena siete,
e non so io perché, nel mondo gramo”,
diss’elli a noi, “guardate e attendete

a la miseria del maestro Adamo;
io ebbi, vivo, assai di quel ch’i’ volli,
e ora, lasso!, un gocciol d’acqua bramo.

Li ruscelletti che d’i verdi colli
del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno,
faccendo i lor canali freddi e molli,

sempre mi stanno innanzi, e non indarno,
ché l’imagine lor vie più m’asciuga
che ‘l male ond’io nel volto mi discarno.

La rigida giustizia che mi fruga
tragge cagion del loco ov’io peccai
a metter più li miei sospiri in fuga.

Ivi è Romena, là dov’io falsai
la lega suggellata del Batista;
per ch’io il corpo sù arso lasciai.

Ma s’io vedessi qui l’anima trista
di Guido o d’Alessandro o di lor frate,
per Fonte Branda non darei la vista.

Dentro c’è l’una già, se l’arrabbiate
ombre che vanno intorno dicon vero;
ma che mi val, c’ ho le membra legate?

S’io fossi pur di tanto ancor leggero
ch’i’ potessi in cent’anni andare un’oncia,
io sarei messo già per lo sentiero,

cercando lui tra questa gente sconcia,
con tutto ch’ella volge undici miglia,
e men d’un mezzo di traverso non ci ha.

Io son per lor tra sì fatta famiglia;
e' m'indussero a batter li fiorini
ch'avevan tre carati di mondiglia". 90

E io a lui: "Chi son li due tapini
che fumman come man bagnate 'l verno,
giacendo stretti a' tuoi destri confini?". 93

"Qui li trovai - e poi volta non dierno -",
rispuose, "quando piovvi in questo greppo,
e non credo che dieno in sempiterno. 96

L'una è la falsa ch'accusò Gioseppo;
l'altr'è 'l falso Sinon greco di Troia:
per febbre aguta gittan tanto leppo". 99

E l'un di lor, che si recò a noia
forse d'esser nomato sì oscuro,
col pugno li percosse l'epa croia. 102

Quella sonò come fosse un tamburo;
e mastro Adamo li percosse il volto
col braccio suo, che non parve men duro, 105

dicendo a lui: "Ancor che mi sia tolto
lo muover per le membra che son gravi,
ho io il braccio a tal mestiere sciolto". 108

Ond'ei rispuose: "Quando tu andavi
al fuoco, non l'avei tu così presto;
ma sì e più l'avei quando coniavi". 111

E l'idropico: "Tu di' ver di questo:
ma tu non fosti sì ver testimonio
là 've del ver fosti a Troia richesto". 114

"S'io dissi falso, e tu falsasti il conio",
disse Sinon; "e son qui per un fallo,
e tu per più ch'alcun altro demonio!". 117

“Ricorditi, spergiuro, del cavallo”,
rispuose quel ch’avëa infiata l’epa;
“e sieti reo che tutto il mondo sallo!”.

“E te sia rea la sete onde ti crepa”,
disse ‘l Greco, “la lingua, e l’acqua marcia
che ‘l ventre innanzi a li occhi sì t’assiepa!”.

Allora il monetier: “Così si squarcia
la bocca tua per tuo mal come suole;
ché, s’i’ ho sete e omor mi rinfarcia,

tu hai l’arsura e ‘l capo che ti duole,
e per leccar lo specchio di Narcisso,
non vorresti a ‘nvitar molte parole”.

Ad ascoltarli er’io del tutto fisso,
quando ‘l maestro mi disse: “Or pur mira,
che per poco che teco non mi risso!”.

Quand’io ‘l senti’ a me parlar con ira,
volsimi verso lui con tal vergogna,
ch’ancor per la memoria mi si gira.

Qual è colui che suo dannaggio sogna,
che sognando desidera sognare,
sì che quel ch’è, come non fosse, agogna,

tal mi fec’io, non possendo parlare,
che disïava scusarmi, e scusava
me tuttavia, e nol mi credea fare.

“Maggior difetto men vergogna lava”,
disse ‘l maestro, “che ‘l tuo non è stato;
però d’ogne trestizia ti disgrava.

E fa ragion ch’io ti sia sempre allato,
se più avvien che fortuna t’accoglia
dove sien genti in simigliante piato:

ché voler ciò udire è bassa voglia”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentunesimo

Canto XXXI, ove tratta de' giganti che guardano il pozzo de l'inferno, ed è il nono cerchio.

Una medesma lingua pria mi morse,
sì che mi tinse l'una e l'altra guancia,
e poi la medicina mi riporse;

così od'io che solea far la lancia
d'Achille e del suo padre esser cagione
prima di trista e poi di buona mancia.

Noi demmo il dosso al misero vallone
su per la ripa che 'l cinge dintorno,
attraversando sanza alcun sermone.

Quiv'era men che notte e men che giorno,
sì che 'l viso m'andava innanzi poco;
ma io senti' sonare un alto corno,

tanto ch'avrebbe ogne tuon fatto fioco,
che, contra sé la sua via seguitando,
dirizzò li occhi miei tutti ad un loco.

Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando
Carlo Magno perdé la santa gesta,
non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando.

Poco portäi in là volta la testa,
che me parve veder molte alte torri;
ond'io: "Maestro, dì, che terra è questa?".

Ed elli a me: "Però che tu trascorri
per le tenebre troppo da la lungi,
avvien che poi nel maginare abborri.

Tu vedrai ben, se tu là ti congiungi,
quanto 'l senso s'inganna di lontano;

però alquanto più te stesso pungi”.

Poi caramente mi prese per mano
e disse: “Pria che noi siam più avanti,
acciò che ‘l fatto men ti paia strano,

sappi che non son torri, ma giganti,
e son nel pozzo intorno da la ripa
da l’umbilico in giuso tutti quanti”.

Come quando la nebbia si dissipa,
lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura
ciò che cela ‘l vapor che l’aere stipa,

così forando l’aura grossa e scura,
più e più appressando ver’ la sponda,
fuggiemi errore e cresciemi paura;

però che, come su la cerchia tonda
Montereggion di torri si corona,
così la proda che ‘l pozzo circonda

torreggiavan di mezza la persona
li orribili giganti, cui minaccia
Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona.

E io scorgeva già d’alcun la faccia,
le spalle e ‘l petto e del ventre gran parte,
e per le coste giù ambo le braccia.

Natura certo, quando lasciò l’arte
di sì fatti animali, assai fé bene
per tòrre tali essecutori a Marte.

E s’ella d’elefanti e di balene
non si pente, chi guarda sottilmente,
più giusta e più discreta la ne tene;

ché dove l’argomento de la mente
s’aggiugne al mal volere e a la possa,

nessun riparo vi può far la gente.

La faccia sua mi parea lunga e grossa
come la pina di San Pietro a Roma,
e a sua proporzione eran l’altre ossa;

sì che la ripa, ch’era perizoma
dal mezzo in giù, ne mostrava ben tanto
di sovra, che di giugnere a la chioma

tre Frison s’averien dato mal vanto;
però ch’i’ ne vedea trenta gran palmi
dal loco in giù dov’omo affibbia ‘l manto.

“Raphèl maì amècche zabì almi”,
cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca,
cui non si convenia più dolci salmi.

E ‘l duca mio ver’ lui: “Anima sciocca,
tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfoga
quand’ira o altra passïon ti tocca!

Cércati al collo, e troverai la soga
che ‘l tien legato, o anima confusa,
e vedi lui che ‘l gran petto ti doga”.

Poi disse a me: “Elli stessi s’accusa;
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal coto
pur un linguaggio nel mondo non s’usa.

Lasciànlo stare e non parliamo a vòto;
ché così è a lui ciascun linguaggio
come ‘l suo ad altrui, ch’a nullo è noto”.

Facemmo adunque più lungo vïaggio,
vòlti a sinistra; e al trar d’un balestro
trovammo l’altro assai più fero e maggio.

A cigner lui qual che fosse ‘l maestro,
non so io dir, ma el tenea soccinto

dinanzi l’altro e dietro il braccio destro 87

d’una catena che ‘l tenea avvinto
dal collo in giù, sì che ‘n su lo scoperto
si ravvolgëa infino al giro quinto. 90

“Questo superbo volle esser esperto
di sua potenza contra ‘l sommo Giove”,
disse ‘l mio duca, “ond’elli ha cotal merto. 93

Fïalte ha nome, e fece le gran prove
quando i giganti fer paura a’ dèi;
le braccia ch’el menò, già mai non move”. 96

E io a lui: “S’esser puote, io vorrei
che de lo smisurato Brïareo
esperïenza avesser li occhi mei”. 99

Ond’ei rispuose: “Tu vedrai Anteo
presso di qui che parla ed è disciolto,
che ne porrà nel fondo d’ogne reo. 102

Quel che tu vuo’ veder, più là è molto
ed è legato e fatto come questo,
salvo che più feroce par nel volto”. 105

Non fu tremoto già tanto rubesto,
che scotesse una torre così forte,
come Fïalte a scuotersi fu presto. 108

Allor temett’io più che mai la morte,
e non v’era mestier più che la dotta,
s’io non avessi viste le ritorte. 111

Noi procedemmo più avante allotta,
e venimmo ad Anteo, che ben cinque alle,
sanza la testa, uscia fuor de la grotta. 114

“O tu che ne la fortunata valle
che fece Scipïon di gloria reda,

quand’Anibàl co’ suoi diede le spalle,

recasti già mille leon per preda,
e che, se fossi stato a l’alta guerra
de’ tuoi fratelli, ancor par che si creda

ch’avrebber vinto i figli de la terra:
mettine giù, e non ten vegna schifo,
dove Cocito la freddura serra.

Non ci fare ire a Tizio né a Tifo:
questi può dar di quel che qui si brama;
però ti china e non torcer lo grifo.

Ancor ti può nel mondo render fama,
ch’el vive, e lunga vita ancor aspetta
se ‘nnanzi tempo grazia a sé nol chiama”.

Così disse ‘l maestro; e quelli in fretta
le man distese, e prese ‘l duca mio,
ond’Ercule sentì già grande stretta.

Virgilio, quando prender si sentio,
disse a me: “Fatti qua, sì ch’io ti prenda”;
poi fece sì ch’un fascio era elli e io.

Qual pare a riguardar la Carisenda
sotto ‘l chinato, quando un nuvol vada
sovr’essa sì, ched ella incontro penda:

tal parve Antëo a me che stava a bada
di vederlo chinare, e fu tal ora
ch’i’ avrei voluto ir per altra strada.

Ma lievemente al fondo che divora
Lucifero con Giuda, ci sposò;
né, sì chinato, lì fece dimora,

e come albero in nave si levò.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentaduesimo

Canto XXXII, nel quale tratta de' traditori di loro schiatta e de' traditori de la loro patria, che sono nel pozzo de l'inferno.

S'ïo avessi le rime aspre e chiocce,
come si converrebbe al tristo buco
sovra 'l qual pontan tutte l'altre rocce,

io premerei di mio concetto il suco
più pienamente; ma perch'io non l'abbo,
non sanza tema a dicer mi conduco;

ché non è impresa da pigliare a gabbo
discriver fondo a tutto l'universo,
né da lingua che chiami mamma o babbo.

Ma quelle donne aiutino il mio verso
ch'aiutaro Anfïone a chiuder Tebe,
sì che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso.

Oh sovra tutte mal creata plebe
che stai nel loco onde parlare è duro,
mei foste state qui pecore o zebe!

Come noi fummo giù nel pozzo scuro
sotto i piè del gigante assai più bassi,
e io mirava ancora a l'alto muro,

dicere udi' mi: "Guarda come passi:
va sì, che tu non calchi con le piante
le teste de' fratei miseri lassi".

Per ch'io mi volsi, e vidimi davante
e sotto i piedi un lago che per gelo
avea di vetro e non d'acqua sembiante.

Non fece al corso suo sì grosso velo
di verno la Danoia in Osterlicchi,

né Tanaï là sotto ‘l freddo cielo,

com’era quivi; che se Tambernicchi
vi fosse sù caduto, o Pietrapana,
non avria pur da l’orlo fatto cricchi.

E come a gracidar si sta la rana
col muso fuor de l’acqua, quando sogna
di spigolar sovente la villana,

livide, insin là dove appar vergogna
eran l’ombre dolenti ne la ghiaccia,
mettendo i denti in nota di cicogna.

Ognuna in giù tenea volta la faccia;
da bocca il freddo, e da li occhi il cor tristo
tra lor testimonianza si procaccia.

Quand’io m’ebbi dintorno alquanto visto,
volsimi a’ piedi, e vidi due sì stretti,
che ‘l pel del capo avieno insieme misto.

“Ditemi, voi che sì strignete i petti”,
diss’io, “chi siete?”. E quei piegaro i colli;
e poi ch’ebber li visi a me eretti,

li occhi lor, ch’eran pria pur dentro molli,
gocciar su per le labbra, e ‘l gelo strinse
le lagrime tra essi e riserrolli.

Con legno legno spranga mai non cinse
forte così; ond’ei come due becchi
cozzaro insieme, tanta ira li vinse.

E un ch’avea perduti ambo li orecchi
per la freddura, pur col viso in giùe,
disse: “Perché cotanto in noi ti specchi?

Se vuoi saper chi son cotesti due,
la valle onde Bisenzo si dichina

del padre loro Alberto e di lor fue.

D’un corpo usciro; e tutta la Caina
potrai cercare, e non troverai ombra
degna più d’esser fitta in gelatina:

non quelli a cui fu rotto il petto e l’ombra
con esso un colpo per la man d’Artù;
non Focaccia; non questi che m’ingombra

col capo sì, ch’i’ non veggio oltre più,
e fu nomato Sassol Mascheroni;
se tosco se’, ben sai omai chi fu.

E perché non mi metti in più sermoni,
sappi ch’i’ fu’ il Camiscion de’ Pazzi;
e aspetto Carlin che mi scagioni”.

Poscia vid’io mille visi cagnazzi
fatti per freddo; onde mi vien riprezzo,
e verrà sempre, de’ gelati guazzi.

E mentre ch’andavamo inver’ lo mezzo
al quale ogne gravezza si rauna,
e io tremava ne l’etterno rezzo;

se voler fu o destino o fortuna,
non so; ma, passeggiando tra le teste,
forte percossi ‘l piè nel viso ad una.

Piangendo mi sgridò: “Perché mi peste?
se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
di Montaperti, perché mi moleste?”.

E io: “Maestro mio, or qui m’aspetta,
sì ch’io esca d’un dubbio per costui;
poi mi farai, quantunque vorrai, fretta”.

Lo duca stette, e io dissi a colui
che bestemmiava duramente ancora:

“Qual se’ tu che così rampogni altrui?”.

“Or tu chi se’ che vai per l’Antenora,
percotendo”, rispuose, “altrui le gote,
sì che, se fossi vivo, troppo fora?”.

“Vivo son io, e caro esser ti puote”,
fu mia risposta, “se dimandi fama,
ch’io metta il nome tuo tra l’altre note”.

Ed elli a me: “Del contrario ho io brama.
Lèvati quinci e non mi dar più lagna,
ché mal sai lusingar per questa lama!”.

Allor lo presi per la cuticagna
e dissi: “El converrà che tu ti nomi,
o che capel qui sù non ti rimagna”.

Ond’elli a me: “Perché tu mi dischiomi,
né ti dirò ch’io sia, né mosterrolti
se mille fiate in sul capo mi tomi”.

Io avea già i capelli in mano avvolti,
e tratti glien’avea più d’una ciocca,
latrando lui con li occhi in giù raccolti,

quando un altro gridò: “Che hai tu, Bocca?
non ti basta sonar con le mascelle,
se tu non latri? qual diavol ti tocca?”.

“Omai”, diss’io, “non vo’ che più favelle,
malvagio traditor; ch’a la tua onta
io porterò di te vere novelle”.

“Va via”, rispuose, “e ciò che tu vuoi conta;
ma non tacer, se tu di qua entro eschi,
di quel ch’ebbe or così la lingua pronta.

El piange qui l’argento de’ Franceschi:
“Io vidi”, potrai dir, “quel da Duera

là dove i peccatori stanno freschi”.

Se fossi domandato “Altri chi v’era?”,
tu hai dallato quel di Beccheria
di cui segò Fiorenza la gorgiera.

Gianni de’ Soldanier credo che sia
più là con Ganellone e Tebaldello,
ch’aprì Faenza quando si dormia”.

Noi eravam partiti già da ello,
ch’io vidi due ghiacciati in una buca,
sì che l’un capo a l’altro era cappello;

e come ‘l pan per fame si manduca,
così ‘l sovran li denti a l’altro pose
là ‘ve ‘l cervel s’aggiugne con la nuca:

non altrimenti Tidëo si rose
le tempie a Menalippo per disdegno,
che quei faceva il teschio e l’altre cose.

“O tu che mostri per sì bestial segno
odio sovra colui che tu ti mangi,
dimmi ‘l perché”, diss’io, “per tal convegno,

che se tu a ragion di lui ti piangi,
sappiendo chi voi siete e la sua pecca,
nel mondo suso ancora io te ne cangi,

se quella con ch’io parlo non si secca”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentatreesimo

Canto XXXIII, ove tratta di quelli che tradirono coloro che in loro tutto si fidavano, e coloro da cui erano stati promossi a dignità e grande stato; e riprende qui i Pisani e i Genovesi.

La bocca sollevò dal fiero pasto
quel peccator, forbendola a' capelli
del capo ch'elli avea di retro guasto.

Poi cominciò: "Tu vuo' ch'io rinovelli
disperato dolor che 'l cor mi preme
già pur pensando, pria ch'io ne favelli.

Ma se le mie parole esser dien seme
che frutti infamia al traditor ch'i' rodo,
parlare e lagrimar vedrai insieme.

Io non so chi tu se' né per che modo
venuto se' qua giù; ma fiorentino
mi sembri veramente quand'io t'odo.

Tu dei saper ch'i' fui conte Ugolino,
e questi è l'arcivescovo Ruggieri:
or ti dirò perché i son tal vicino.

Che per l'effetto de' suo' mai pensieri,
fidandomi di lui, io fossi preso
e poscia morto, dir non è mestieri;

però quel che non puoi avere inteso,
cioè come la morte mia fu cruda,
udirai, e saprai s'e' m' ha offeso.

Breve pertugio dentro da la Muda,
la qual per me ha 'l titol de la fame,
e che conviene ancor ch'altrui si chiuda,

m’avea mostrato per lo suo forame
più lune già, quand’io feci ‘l mal sonno
che del futuro mi squarciò ‘l velame.

Questi pareva a me maestro e donno,
cacciando il lupo e ‘ lupicini al monte
per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno.

Con cagne magre, studïose e conte
Gualandi con Sismondi e con Lanfranchi
s’avea messi dinanzi da la fronte.

In picciol corso mi parieno stanchi
lo padre e ‘ figli, e con l’agute scane
mi parea lor veder fender li fianchi.

Quando fui desto innanzi la dimane,
pianger senti’ fra ‘l sonno i miei figliuoli
ch’eran con meco, e dimandar del pane.

Ben se’ crudel, se tu già non ti duoli
pensando ciò che ‘l mio cor s’annunziava;
e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?

Già eran desti, e l’ora s’appressava
che ‘l cibo ne solëa essere addotto,
e per suo sogno ciascun dubitava;

e io senti’ chiavar l’uscio di sotto
a l’orribile torre; ond’io guardai
nel viso a’ mie’ figliuoi sanza far motto.

Io non piangëa, sì dentro impetrai:
piangevan elli; e Anselmuccio mio
disse: “Tu guardi sì, padre! che hai?”.

Perciò non lagrimai né rispuos’io
tutto quel giorno né la notte appresso,
infin che l’altro sol nel mondo uscìo.

Come un poco di raggio si fu messo
nel doloroso carcere, e io scorsi
per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso,

ambo le man per lo dolor mi morsi;
ed ei, pensando ch'io 'l fessi per voglia
di manicar, di sùbito levorsi

e disser: "Padre, assai ci fia men doglia
se tu mangi di noi: tu ne vestisti
queste misere carni, e tu le spoglia".

Queta' mi allor per non farli più tristi;
lo dì e l'altro stemmo tutti muti;
ahi dura terra, perché non t'apristi?

Poscia che fummo al quarto dì venuti,
Gaddo mi si gittò disteso a' piedi,
dicendo: "Padre mio, ché non m'aiuti?".

Quivi morì; e come tu mi vedi,
vid'io cascar li tre ad uno ad uno
tra 'l quinto dì e 'l sesto; ond'io mi diedi,

già cieco, a brancolar sovra ciascuno,
e due dì li chiamai, poi che fur morti.
Poscia, più che 'l dolor, poté 'l digiuno".

Quand'ebbe detto ciò, con li occhi torti
riprese 'l teschio misero co' denti,
che furo a l'osso, come d'un can, forti.

Ahi Pisa, vituperio de le genti
del bel paese là dove 'l sì suona,
poi che i vicini a te punir son lenti,

muovasi la Capraia e la Gorgona,
e faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce,
sì ch'elli annieghi in te ogne persona!

Che se ‘l conte Ugolino aveva voce
d’aver tradita te de le castella,
non dovei tu i figliuoi porre a tal croce.

Innocenti facea l’età novella,
novella Tebe, Uguiccione e ‘l Brigata
e li altri due che ‘l canto suso appella.

Noi passammo oltre, là ‘ve la gelata
ruvidamente un’altra gente fascia,
non volta in giù, ma tutta riversata.

Lo pianto stesso lì pianger non lascia,
e ‘l duol che truova in su li occhi rintoppo,
si volge in entro a far crescer l’ambascia;

ché le lagrime prime fanno groppo,
e sì come visiere di cristallo,
rïempion sotto ‘l ciglio tutto il coppo.

E avvegna che, sì come d’un callo,
per la freddura ciascun sentimento
cessato avesse del mio viso stallo,

già mi parea sentire alquanto vento;
per ch’io: “Maestro mio, questo chi move?
non è qua giù ogne vapore spento?”.

Ond’elli a me: “Avaccio sarai dove
di ciò ti farà l’occhio la risposta,
veggendo la cagion che ‘l fiato piove”.

E un de’ tristi de la fredda crosta
gridò a noi: “O anime crudeli
tanto che data v’è l’ultima posta,

levatemi dal viso i duri veli,
sì ch’ïo sfoghi ‘l duol che ‘l cor m’impregna,
un poco, pria che ‘l pianto si raggeli”.

Per ch’io a lui: “Se vuo’ ch’i’ ti sovvegna,
dimmi chi se’, e s’io non ti disbrigo,
al fondo de la ghiaccia ir mi convegna”.

Rispuose adunque: “I’ son frate Alberigo;
i’ son quel da le frutta del mal orto,
che qui riprendo dattero per figo”.

“Oh”, diss’io lui, “or se’ tu ancor morto?”.
Ed elli a me: “Come ‘l mio corpo stea
nel mondo sù, nulla scïenza porto.

Cotal vantaggio ha questa Tolomea,
che spesse volte l’anima ci cade
innanzi ch’Atropòs mossa le dea.

E perché tu più volontier mi rade
le ‘nvetrïate lagrime dal volto,
sappie che, tosto che l’anima trade

come fec’ïo, il corpo suo l’è tolto
da un demonio, che poscia il governa
mentre che ‘l tempo suo tutto sia vòlto.

Ella ruina in sì fatta cisterna;
e forse pare ancor lo corpo suso
de l’ombra che di qua dietro mi verna.

Tu ‘l dei saper, se tu vien pur mo giuso:
elli è ser Branca Doria, e son più anni
poscia passati ch’el fu sì racchiuso”.

“Io credo”, diss’io lui, “che tu m’inganni;
ché Branca Doria non morì unquanche,
e mangia e bee e dorme e veste panni”.

“Nel fosso sù”, diss’el, “de’ Malebranche,
là dove bolle la tenace pece,
non era ancora giunto Michel Zanche,

che questi lasciò il diavolo in sua vece
nel corpo suo, ed un suo prossimano
che ‘l tradimento insieme con lui fece.

Ma distendi oggimai in qua la mano;
aprimi li occhi”. E io non gliel’apersi;
e cortesia fu lui esser villano.

Ahi Genovesi, uomini diversi
d’ogne costume e pien d’ogne magagna,
perché non siete voi del mondo spersi?

Ché col peggiore spirto di Romagna
trovai di voi un tal, che per sua opra
in anima in Cocito già si bagna,

e in corpo par vivo ancor di sopra.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentaquattresimo

Canto XXXIV e ultimo de la prima cantica di Dante Alleghieri di Fiorenza, nel qual canto tratta di Belzebù principe de' dimoni e de' traditori di loro signori, e narra come uscie de l'inferno.

"Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni
verso di noi; però dinanzi mira",
disse 'l maestro mio, "se tu 'l discerni".

Come quando una grossa nebbia spira,
o quando l'emisperio nostro annotta,
par di lungi un molin che 'l vento gira,

veder mi parve un tal dificio allotta;
poi per lo vento mi ristrinsi retro
al duca mio, ché non lì era altra grotta.

Già era, e con paura il metto in metro,
là dove l'ombre tutte eran coperte,
e trasparien come festuca in vetro.

Altre sono a giacere; altre stanno erte,
quella col capo e quella con le piante;
altra, com'arco, il volto a' piè rinverte.

Quando noi fummo fatti tanto avante,
ch'al mio maestro piacque di mostrarmi
la creatura ch'ebbe il bel sembiante,

d'innanzi mi si tolse e fé restarmi,
"Ecco Dite", dicendo, "ed ecco il loco
ove convien che di fortezza t'armi".

Com'io divenni allor gelato e fioco,
nol dimandar, lettor, ch'i' non lo scrivo,
però ch'ogne parlar sarebbe poco.

Io non mori’ e non rimasi vivo;
pensa oggimai per te, s’ hai fior d’ingegno,
qual io divenni, d’uno e d’altro privo.

Lo ‘mperador del doloroso regno
da mezzo ‘l petto uscia fuor de la ghiaccia;
e più con un gigante io mi convegno,

che i giganti non fan con le sue braccia:
vedi oggimai quant’esser dee quel tutto
ch’a così fatta parte si confaccia.

S’el fu sì bel com’elli è ora brutto,
e contra ‘l suo fattore alzò le ciglia,
ben dee da lui procedere ogne lutto.

Oh quanto parve a me gran maraviglia
quand’io vidi tre facce a la sua testa!
L’una dinanzi, e quella era vermiglia;

l’altr’eran due, che s’aggiugnieno a questa
sovresso ‘l mezzo di ciascuna spalla,
e sé giugnieno al loco de la cresta:

e la destra parea tra bianca e gialla;
la sinistra a vedere era tal, quali
vegnon di là onde ‘l Nilo s’avvalla.

Sotto ciascuna uscivan due grand’ali,
quanto si convenia a tanto uccello:
vele di mar non vid’io mai cotali.

Non avean penne, ma di vispistrello
era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava,
sì che tre venti si movean da ello:

quindi Cocito tutto s’aggelava.
Con sei occhi piangëa, e per tre menti
gocciava ‘l pianto e sanguinosa bava.

Da ogne bocca dirompea co’ denti
un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla,
sì che tre ne facea così dolenti.

A quel dinanzi il mordere era nulla
verso ‘l graffiar, che talvolta la schiena
rimanea de la pelle tutta brulla.

“Quell’anima là sù c’ ha maggior pena”,
disse ‘l maestro, “è Giuda Scarïotto,
che ‘l capo ha dentro e fuor le gambe mena.

De li altri due c’ hanno il capo di sotto,
quel che pende dal nero ceffo è Bruto:
vedi come si storce, e non fa motto!;

e l’altro è Cassio, che par sì membruto.
Ma la notte risurge, e oramai
è da partir, ché tutto avem veduto”.

Com’a lui piacque, il collo li avvinghiai;
ed el prese di tempo e loco poste,
e quando l’ali fuoro aperte assai,

appigliò sé a le vellute coste;
di vello in vello giù discese poscia
tra ‘l folto pelo e le gelate croste.

Quando noi fummo là dove la coscia
si volge, a punto in sul grosso de l’anche,
lo duca, con fatica e con angoscia,

volse la testa ov’elli avea le zanche,
e aggrappossi al pel com’om che sale,
sì che ‘n inferno i’ credea tornar anche.

“Attienti ben, ché per cotali scale”,
disse ‘l maestro, ansando com’uom lasso,
“conviensi dipartir da tanto male”.

Poi uscì fuor per lo fóro d’un sasso
e puose me in su l’orlo a sedere;
appresso porse a me l’accorto passo.

Io levai li occhi e credetti vedere
Lucifero com’io l’avea lasciato,
e vidili le gambe in sù tenere;

e s’io divenni allora travagliato,
la gente grossa il pensi, che non vede
qual è quel punto ch’io avea passato.

“Lèvati sù”, disse ‘l maestro, “in piede:
la via è lunga e ‘l cammino è malvagio,
e già il sole a mezza terza riede”.

Non era camminata di palagio
là ‘v’eravam, ma natural burella
ch’avea mal suolo e di lume disagio.

“Prima ch’io de l’abisso mi divella,
maestro mio”, diss’io quando fui dritto,
“a trarmi d’erro un poco mi favella:

ov’è la ghiaccia? e questi com’è fitto
sì sottosopra? e come, in sì poc’ora,
da sera a mane ha fatto il sol tragitto?”.

Ed elli a me: “Tu imagini ancora
d’esser di là dal centro, ov’io mi presi
al pel del vermo reo che ‘l mondo fóra.

Di là fosti cotanto quant’io scesi;
quand’io mi volsi, tu passasti ‘l punto
al qual si traggon d’ogne parte i pesi.

E se’ or sotto l’emisperio giunto
ch’è contraposto a quel che la gran secca
coverchia, e sotto ‘l cui colmo consunto

fu l’uom che nacque e visse sanza pecca;
tu haï i piedi in su picciola spera
che l’altra faccia fa de la Giudecca.

Qui è da man, quando di là è sera;
e questi, che ne fé scala col pelo,
fitto è ancora sì come prim’era.

Da questa parte cadde giù dal cielo;
e la terra, che pria di qua si sporse,
per paura di lui fé del mar velo,

e venne a l’emisperio nostro; e forse
per fuggir lui lasciò qui loco vòto
quella ch’appar di qua, e sù ricorse”.

Luogo è là giù da Belzebù remoto
tanto quanto la tomba si distende,
che non per vista, ma per suono è noto

d’un ruscelletto che quivi discende
per la buca d’un sasso, ch’elli ha roso,
col corso ch’elli avvolge, e poco pende.

Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e sanza cura aver d’alcun riposo,

salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch’i’ vidi de le cose belle
che porta ‘l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

PURGATORIO

Usciti dall'Inferno attraverso la natural burella, Dante e Virgilio si ritrovano nell'emisfero australe terrestre (che si credeva interamente ricoperto d'acqua), dove, in mezzo al mare, s'innalza la montagna del Purgatorio, creata con la terra che servì a scavare il baratro dell'Inferno, quando Lucifero fu buttato fuori dal Paradiso dopo la rivolta contro Dio. Usciti dal cunicolo, i due giungono su una spiaggia, dove incontrano Catone Uticense, che svolge il compito di guardiano del Purgatorio. Dovendo cominciare a salire la ripida montagna, che si dimostra impossibile da scalare, tanto è ripida, Dante chiede ad alcune anime quale sia il varco più vicino; sono questi la prima schiera dei negligenti, i morti scomunicati, che hanno dimora nell'antipurgatorio. Nella I schiera di negligenti dell'antipurgatorio Dante incontra Manfredi di Svevia. Assieme a coloro che tardarono a pentirsi per pigrizia, ai morti per violenza e ai principi negligenti, infatti, essi attendono il tempo di purificazione necessario a permettere loro di accedere al Purgatorio vero e proprio. All'ingresso della valletta dove si trovano i principi negligenti, Dante, su indicazione di Virgilio, chiede indicazioni ad un'anima che si rivela essere una sorta di guardiano della valletta, il concittadino di Virgilio Sordello, che sarà la guida dei due fino alla porta del Purgatorio.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto Primo *Comincia la seconda parte overo cantica de la Comedia di Dante Allaghieri di Firenze, ne la quale parte si purgano li commessi peccati e vizi de' quali l'uomo è confesso e pentuto con animo di sodisfazione; e contiene XXXIII canti. Qui sono quelli che sperano di venire quando che sia a le beate genti.*

Per correr miglior acque alza le vele
omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele;

e canterò di quel secondo regno
dove l'umano spirito si purga

e di salire al ciel diventa degno. 6

Ma qui la morta poesì resurga,
o sante Muse, poi che vostro sono;
e qui Calïopè alquanto surga, 9

seguitando il mio canto con quel suono
di cui le Piche misere sentiro
lo colpo tal, che disperar perdono. 12

Dolce color d'orïental zaffiro,
che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
del mezzo, puro infino al primo giro, 15

a li occhi miei ricominciò diletto,
tosto ch'io usci' fuor de l'aura morta
che m'avea contristati li occhi e 'l petto. 18

Lo bel pianeto che d'amar conforta
faceva tutto rider l'orïente,
velando i Pesci ch'erano in sua scorta. 21

I' mi volsi a man destra, e puosi mente
a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente. 24

Goder pareva 'l ciel di lor fiammelle:
oh settentrïonal vedovo sito,
poi che privato se' di mirar quelle! 27

Com'io da loro sguardo fui partito,
un poco me volgendo a l'altro polo,
là onde 'l Carro già era sparito, 30

vidi presso di me un veglio solo,
degno di tanta reverenza in vista,
che più non dee a padre alcun figliuolo. 33

Lunga la barba e di pel bianco mista
portava, a' suoi capelli simigliante,

de’ quai cadeva al petto doppia lista.

Li raggi de le quattro luci sante
fregiavan sì la sua faccia di lume,
ch’i’ ‘l vedea come ‘l sol fosse davante.

“Chi siete voi che contro al cieco fiume
fuggita avete la pregione etterna?”,
diss’el, movendo quelle oneste piume.

“Chi v’ ha guidati, o che vi fu lucerna,
uscendo fuor de la profonda notte
che sempre nera fa la valle inferna?

Son le leggi d’abisso così rotte?
o è mutato in ciel novo consiglio,
che, dannati, venite a le mie grotte?”.

Lo duca mio allor mi diè di piglio,
e con parole e con mani e con cenni
reverenti mi fé le gambe e ‘l ciglio.

Poscia rispuose lui: “Da me non venni:
donna scese del ciel, per li cui prieghi
de la mia compagnia costui sovvenni.

Ma da ch’è tuo voler che più si spieghi
di nostra condizion com’ell’è vera,
esser non puote il mio che a te si nieghi.

Questi non vide mai l’ultima sera;
ma per la sua follia le fu sì presso,
che molto poco tempo a volger era.

Sì com’io dissi, fui mandato ad esso
per lui campare; e non lì era altra via
che questa per la quale i’ mi son messo.

Mostrata ho lui tutta la gente ria;
e ora intendo mostrar quelli spirti

che purgan sé sotto la tua balìa. 66

Com’io l’ ho tratto, saria lungo a dirti;
de l’alto scende virtù che m’aiuta
conducerlo a vederti e a udirti. 69

Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta:
libertà va cercando, ch’è sì cara,
come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta. 72

Tu ‘l sai, ché non ti fu per lei amara
in Utica la morte, ove lasciasti
la vesta ch’al gran dì sarà sì chiara. 75

Non son li editti etterni per noi guasti,
ché questi vive e Minòs me non lega;
ma son del cerchio ove son li occhi casti 78

di Marzia tua, che ‘n vista ancor ti priega,
o santo petto, che per tua la tegni:
per lo suo amore adunque a noi ti piega. 81

Lasciane andar per li tuoi sette regni;
grazie riporterò di te a lei,
se d’esser mentovato là giù degni”. 84

“Marzïa piacque tanto a li occhi miei
mentre ch’i’ fu’ di là”, diss’elli allora,
“che quante grazie volse da me, fei. 87

Or che di là dal mal fiume dimora,
più muover non mi può, per quella legge
che fatta fu quando me n’usci’ fora. 90

Ma se donna del ciel ti move e regge,
come tu di’, non c’è mestier lusinghe:
bastisi ben che per lei mi richegge. 93

Va dunque, e fa che tu costui ricinghe
d’un giunco schietto e che li lavi ‘l viso,

sì ch’ogne sucidume quindi stinghe;

ché non si converria, l’occhio sorpriso
d’alcuna nebbia, andar dinanzi al primo
ministro, ch’è di quei di paradiso.

Questa isoletta intorno ad imo ad imo,
là giù colà dove la batte l’onda,
porta di giunchi sovra ‘l molle limo:

null’altra pianta che facesse fronda
o indurasse, vi puote aver vita,
però ch’a le percosse non seconda.

Poscia non sia di qua vostra reddita;
lo sol vi mosterrà, che surge omai,
prendere il monte a più lieve salita”.

Così sparì; e io sù mi levai
sanza parlare, e tutto mi ritrassi
al duca mio, e li occhi a lui drizzai.

El cominciò: “Figliuol, segui i miei passi:
volgianci in dietro, ché di qua dichina
questa pianura a’ suoi termini bassi”.

L’alba vinceva l’ora mattutina
che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano
conobbi il tremolar de la marina.

Noi andavam per lo solingo piano
com’om che torna a la perduta strada,
che ‘nfino ad essa li pare ire in vano.

Quando noi fummo là ‘ve la rugiada
pugna col sole, per essere in parte
dove, ad orezza, poco si dirada,

ambo le mani in su l’erbetta sparte
soavemente ‘l mio maestro pose:

ond’io, che fui accorto di sua arte,

porsi ver’ lui le guance lagrimose;
ivi mi fece tutto discoverto
quel color che l’inferno mi nascose.

Venimmo poi in sul lito diserto,
che mai non vide navicar sue acque
omo, che di tornar sia poscia esperto.

Quivi mi cinse sì com’altrui piacque:
oh maraviglia! ché qual elli scelse
l’umile pianta, cotal si rinacque

subitamente là onde l’avelse.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto secondo

Canto secondo, nel quale tratta de la prima qualitade cioè dilettazione di vanitade, nel quale peccato inviluppati sono puniti proprio fuori del purgatorio in uno piano, e in persona di costoro nomina il Casella, uomo di corte.

Già era ‘l sole a l’orizzonte giunto
lo cui meridïan cerchio coverchia
Ierusalèm col suo più alto punto;

e la notte, che opposita a lui cerchia,
uscia di Gange fuor con le Bilance,
che le caggion di man quando soverchia;

sì che le bianche e le vermiglie guance,
là dov’i’ era, de la bella Aurora
per troppa etate divenivan rance.

Noi eravam lunghesso mare ancora,
come gente che pensa a suo cammino,
che va col cuore e col corpo dimora.

Ed ecco, qual, sorpreso dal mattino,
per li grossi vapor Marte rosseggia
giù nel ponente sovra ‘l suol marino,

cotal m’apparve, s’io ancor lo veggia,
un lume per lo mar venir sì ratto,
che ‘l muover suo nessun volar pareggia.

Dal qual com’io un poco ebbi ritratto
l’occhio per domandar lo duca mio,
rividil più lucente e maggior fatto.

Poi d’ogne lato ad esso m’appario
un non sapeva che bianco, e di sotto
a poco a poco un altro a lui uscìo.

Lo mio maestro ancor non facea motto,
mentre che i primi bianchi apparver ali;
allor che ben conobbe il galeotto,

gridò: “Fa, fa che le ginocchia cali.
Ecco l’angel di Dio: piega le mani;
omai vedrai di sì fatti officiali.

Vedi che sdegna li argomenti umani,
sì che remo non vuol, né altro velo
che l’ali sue, tra liti sì lontani.

Vedi come l’ ha dritte verso ‘l cielo,
trattando l’aere con l’etterne penne,
che non si mutan come mortal pelo”.

Poi, come più e più verso noi venne
l’uccel divino, più chiaro appariva:
per che l’occhio da presso nol sostenne,

ma chinail giuso; e quei sen venne a riva
con un vasello snelletto e leggero,
tanto che l’acqua nulla ne ‘nghiottiva.

Da poppa stava il celestial nocchiero,
tal che faria beato pur descripto;
e più di cento spirti entro sediero.

‘In exitu Isräel de Aegypto’
cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce
con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto.

Poi fece il segno lor di santa croce;
ond’ei si gittar tutti in su la piaggia:
ed el sen gì, come venne, veloce.

La turba che rimase lì, selvaggia
parea del loco, rimirando intorno
come colui che nove cose assaggia.

Da tutte parti saettava il giorno
lo sol, ch'avea con le saette conte
di mezzo 'l ciel cacciato Capricorno,

quando la nova gente alzò la fronte
ver' noi, dicendo a noi: "Se voi sapete,
mostratene la via di gire al monte".

E Virgilio rispuose: "Voi credete
forse che siamo esperti d'esto loco;
ma noi siam peregrin come voi siete.

Dianzi venimmo, innanzi a voi un poco,
per altra via, che fu sì aspra e forte,
che lo salire omai ne parrà gioco".

L'anime, che si fuor di me accorte,
per lo spirare, ch'i' era ancor vivo,
maravigliando diventaro smorte.

E come a messagger che porta ulivo
tragge la gente per udir novelle,
e di calcar nessun si mostra schivo,

così al viso mio s'affisar quelle
anime fortunate tutte quante,
quasi oblïando d'ire a farsi belle.

Io vidi una di lor trarresi avante
per abbracciarmi, con sì grande affetto,
che mosse me a far lo somigliante.

Ohi ombre vane, fuor che ne l'aspetto!
tre volte dietro a lei le mani avvinsi,
e tante mi tornai con esse al petto.

Di maraviglia, credo, mi dipinsi;
per che l'ombra sorrise e si ritrasse,
e io, seguendo lei, oltre mi pinsi.

Soavemente disse ch’io posasse;
allor conobbi chi era, e pregai
che, per parlarmi, un poco s’arrestasse.

Rispuosemi: “Così com’io t’amai
nel mortal corpo, così t’amo sciolta:
però m’arresto; ma tu perché vai?”.

“Casella mio, per tornar altra volta
là dov’io son, fo io questo vïaggio”,
diss’io; “ma a te com’è tanta ora tolta?”.

Ed elli a me: “Nessun m’è fatto oltraggio,
se quei che leva quando e cui li piace,
più volte m’ ha negato esto passaggio;

ché di giusto voler lo suo si face:
veramente da tre mesi elli ha tolto
chi ha voluto intrar, con tutta pace.

Ond’io, ch’era ora a la marina vòlto
dove l’acqua di Tevero s’insala,
benignamente fu’ da lui ricolto.

A quella foce ha elli or dritta l’ala,
però che sempre quivi si ricoglie
qual verso Acheronte non si cala”.

E io: “Se nuova legge non ti toglie
memoria o uso a l’amoroso canto
che mi solea quetar tutte mie doglie,

di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto
l’anima mia, che, con la sua persona
venendo qui, è affannata tanto!”.

‘Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona’
cominciò elli allor sì dolcemente,
che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona.

Lo mio maestro e io e quella gente
ch’eran con lui parevan sì contenti,
come a nessun toccasse altro la mente.

Noi eravam tutti fissi e attenti
a le sue note; ed ecco il veglio onesto
gridando: “Che è ciò, spiriti lenti?

qual negligenza, quale stare è questo?
Correte al monte a spogliarvi lo scoglio
ch’esser non lascia a voi Dio manifesto”.

Come quando, cogliendo biado o loglio,
li colombi adunati a la pastura,
queti, sanza mostrar l’usato orgoglio,

se cosa appare ond’elli abbian paura,
subitamente lasciano star l’esca,
perch’assaliti son da maggior cura;

così vid’io quella masnada fresca
lasciar lo canto, e fuggir ver’ la costa,
com’om che va, né sa dove rïesca;

né la nostra partita fu men tosta.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto terzo

Canto III, nel quale si tratta de la seconda qualitade, cioè di coloro che per cagione d'alcuna violenza che ricevettero, tardaro di qui a la loro fine a pentersi e confessarsi de' loro falli, sì come sono quelli che muoiono in contumacia di Santa Chiesa scomunicati, li quali sono puniti in quel piano. In essempro di cotali peccatori nomina tra costoro il re Manfredi.

Avvegna che la subitana fuga
dispergesse color per la campagna,
rivolti al monte ove ragion ne fruga,

i' mi ristrinsi a la fida compagna:
e come sare' io sanza lui corso?
chi m'avria tratto su per la montagna?

El mi parea da sé stesso rimorso:
o dignitosa coscïenza e netta,
come t'è picciol fallo amaro morso!

Quando li piedi suoi lasciar la fretta,
che l'onestade ad ogn'atto dismaga,
la mente mia, che prima era ristretta,

lo 'ntento rallargò, sì come vaga,
e diedi 'l viso mio incontr'al poggio
che 'nverso 'l ciel più alto si dislaga.

Lo sol, che dietro fiammeggiava roggio,
rotto m'era dinanzi a la figura,
ch'avëa in me de' suoi raggi l'appoggio.

Io mi volsi dallato con paura
d'essere abbandonato, quand'io vidi
solo dinanzi a me la terra oscura;

e 'l mio conforto: "Perché pur diffidi?",
a dir mi cominciò tutto rivolto;
"non credi tu me teco e ch'io ti guidi?

Vespero è già colà dov’è sepolto
lo corpo dentro al quale io facea ombra;
Napoli l’ ha, e da Brandizio è tolto.

Ora, se innanzi a me nulla s’aombra,
non ti maravigliar più che d’i cieli
che l’uno a l’altro raggio non ingombra.

A sofferir tormenti, caldi e geli
simili corpi la Virtù dispone
che, come fa, non vuol ch’a noi si sveli.

Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione
possa trascorrer la infinita via
che tiene una sustanza in tre persone.

State contenti, umana gente, al quia;
ché, se potuto aveste veder tutto,
mestier non era parturir Maria;

e disïar vedeste sanza frutto
tai che sarebbe lor disio quetato,
ch’etternalmente è dato lor per lutto:

io dico d’Aristotile e di Plato
e di molt’altri”; e qui chinò la fronte,
e più non disse, e rimase turbato.

Noi divenimmo intanto a piè del monte;
quivi trovammo la roccia sì erta,
che ‘ndarno vi sarien le gambe pronte.

Tra Lerice e Turbìa la più diserta,
la più rotta ruina è una scala,
verso di quella, agevole e aperta.

“Or chi sa da qual man la costa cala”,
disse ‘l maestro mio fermando ‘l passo,
“sì che possa salir chi va sanz’ala?”.

E mentre ch’e’ tenendo ‘l viso basso
essaminava del cammin la mente,
e io mirava suso intorno al sasso,

da man sinistra m’apparì una gente
d’anime, che movieno i piè ver’ noi,
e non pareva, sì venïan lente.

“Leva”, diss’io, “maestro, li occhi tuoi:
ecco di qua chi ne darà consiglio,
se tu da te medesmo aver nol puoi”.

Guardò allora, e con libero piglio
rispuose: “Andiamo in là, ch’ei vegnon piano;
e tu ferma la spene, dolce figlio”.

Ancora era quel popol di lontano,
i’ dico dopo i nostri mille passi,
quanto un buon gittator trarria con mano,

quando si strinser tutti ai duri massi
de l’alta ripa, e stetter fermi e stretti
com’a guardar, chi va dubbiando, stassi.

“O ben finiti, o già spiriti eletti”,
Virgilio incominciò, “per quella pace
ch’i’ credo che per voi tutti s’aspetti,

ditene dove la montagna giace,
sì che possibil sia l’andare in suso;
ché perder tempo a chi più sa più spiace”.

Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso
a una, a due, a tre, e l’altre stanno
timidette atterrando l’occhio e ‘l muso;

e ciò che fa la prima, e l’altre fanno,
addossandosi a lei, s’ella s’arresta,
semplici e quete, e lo ‘mperché non sanno;

sì vid’io muovere a venir la testa
di quella mandra fortunata allotta,
pudica in faccia e ne l’andare onesta.

Come color dinanzi vider rotta
la luce in terra dal mio destro canto,
sì che l’ombra era da me a la grotta,

restaro, e trasser sé in dietro alquanto,
e tutti li altri che venieno appresso,
non sappiendo ‘l perché, fenno altrettanto.

“Sanza vostra domanda io vi confesso
che questo è corpo uman che voi vedete;
per che ‘l lume del sole in terra è fesso.

Non vi maravigliate, ma credete
che non sanza virtù che da ciel vegna
cerchi di soverchiar questa parete”.

Così ‘l maestro; e quella gente degna
“Tornate”, disse, “intrate innanzi dunque”,
coi dossi de le man faccendo insegna.

E un di loro incominciò: “Chiunque
tu se’, così andando, volgi ‘l viso:
pon mente se di là mi vedesti unque”.

Io mi volsi ver’ lui e guardail fiso:
biondo era e bello e di gentile aspetto,
ma l’un de’ cigli un colpo avea diviso.

Quand’io mi fui umilmente disdetto
d’averlo visto mai, el disse: “Or vedi”;
e mostrommi una piaga a sommo ‘l petto.

Poi sorridendo disse: “Io son Manfredi,
nepote di Costanza imperadrice;
ond’io ti priego che, quando tu riedi,

vadi a mia bella figlia, genitrice
de l’onor di Cicilia e d’Aragona,
e dichi ‘l vero a lei, s’altro si dice.

Poscia ch’io ebbi rotta la persona
di due punte mortali, io mi rendei,
piangendo, a quei che volontier perdona.

Orribil furon li peccati miei;
ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.

Se ‘l pastor di Cosenza, che a la caccia
di me fu messo per Clemente allora,
avesse in Dio ben letta questa faccia,

l’ossa del corpo mio sarieno ancora
in co del ponte presso a Benevento,
sotto la guardia de la grave mora.

Or le bagna la pioggia e move il vento
di fuor dal regno, quasi lungo ‘l Verde,
dov’e’ le trasmutò a lume spento.

Per lor maladizion sì non si perde,
che non possa tornar, l’etterno amore,
mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde.

Vero è che quale in contumacia more
di Santa Chiesa, ancor ch’al fin si penta,
star li convien da questa ripa in fore,

per ognun tempo ch’elli è stato, trenta,
in sua presunzïon, se tal decreto
più corto per buon prieghi non diventa.

Vedi oggimai se tu mi puoi far lieto,
revelando a la mia buona Costanza
come m’ hai visto, e anco esto divieto;

ché qui per quei di là molto s’avanza”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quarto

Canto IV, dove si tratta de la soprascritta seconda qualitade, dove si purga chi per negligenza di qui a la morte si tardòe a confessare; tra i quali si nomina il Belacqua, uomo di corte.

Quando per dilettanze o ver per doglie,
che alcuna virtù nostra comprenda,
l’anima bene ad essa si raccoglie,

par ch’a nulla potenza più intenda;
e questo è contra quello error che crede
ch’un’anima sovr’altra in noi s’accenda.

E però, quando s’ode cosa o vede
che tegna forte a sé l’anima volta,
vassene ‘l tempo e l’uom non se n’avvede;

ch’altra potenza è quella che l’ascolta,
e altra è quella c’ ha l’anima intera:
questa è quasi legata e quella è sciolta.

Di ciò ebb’io esperïenza vera,
udendo quello spirto e ammirando;
ché ben cinquanta gradi salito era

lo sole, e io non m’era accorto, quando
venimmo ove quell’anime ad una
gridaro a noi: “Qui è vostro dimando”.

Maggiore aperta molte volte impruna
con una forcatella di sue spine
l’uom de la villa quando l’uva imbruna,

che non era la calla onde salìne
lo duca mio, e io appresso, soli,
come da noi la schiera si partìne.

Vassi in Sanleo e discendesi in Noli,
montasi su in Bismantova e ‘n Cacume
con esso i piè; ma qui convien ch’om voli;

dico con l’ale snelle e con le piume
del gran disio, di retro a quel condotto
che speranza mi dava e facea lume.

Noi salavam per entro ‘l sasso rotto,
e d’ogne lato ne stringea lo stremo,
e piedi e man volea il suol di sotto.

Poi che noi fummo in su l’orlo suppremo
de l’alta ripa, a la scoperta piaggia,
“Maestro mio”, diss’io, “che via faremo?”.

Ed elli a me: “Nessun tuo passo caggia;
pur su al monte dietro a me acquista,
fin che n’appaia alcuna scorta saggia”.

Lo sommo er’alto che vincea la vista,
e la costa superba più assai
che da mezzo quadrante a centro lista.

Io era lasso, quando cominciai:
“O dolce padre, volgiti, e rimira
com’io rimango sol, se non restai”.

“Figliuol mio”, disse, “infin quivi ti tira”,
additandomi un balzo poco in sùe
che da quel lato il poggio tutto gira.

Sì mi spronaron le parole sue,
ch’i’ mi sforzai carpando appresso lui,
tanto che ‘l cinghio sotto i piè mi fue.

A seder ci ponemmo ivi ambedui
vòlti a levante ond’eravam saliti,
che suole a riguardar giovare altrui.

Li occhi prima drizzai ai bassi liti;
poscia li alzai al sole, e ammirava
che da sinistra n’eravam feriti.

Ben s’avvide il poeta ch’ïo stava
stupido tutto al carro de la luce,
ove tra noi e Aquilone intrava.

Ond’elli a me: “Se Castore e Poluce
fossero in compagnia di quello specchio
che sù e giù del suo lume conduce,

tu vedresti il Zodïaco rubecchio
ancora a l’Orse più stretto rotare,
se non uscisse fuor del cammin vecchio.

Come ciò sia, se ‘l vuoi poter pensare,
dentro raccolto, imagina Siòn
con questo monte in su la terra stare

sì, ch’amendue hanno un solo orizzòn
e diversi emisperi; onde la strada
che mal non seppe carreggiar Fetòn,

vedrai come a costui convien che vada
da l’un, quando a colui da l’altro fianco,
se lo ‘ntelletto tuo ben chiaro bada”.

“Certo, maestro mio”, diss’io, “unquanco
non vid’io chiaro sì com’io discerno
là dove mio ingegno parea manco,

che ‘l mezzo cerchio del moto superno,
che si chiama Equatore in alcun’arte,
e che sempre riman tra ‘l sole e ‘l verno,

per la ragion che di’, quinci si parte
verso settentrïon, quanto li Ebrei
vedevan lui verso la calda parte.

Ma se a te piace, volontier saprei
quanto avemo ad andar; ché ‘l poggio sale
più che salir non posson li occhi miei”.

Ed elli a me: “Questa montagna è tale,
che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave;
e quant’om più va sù, e men fa male.

Però, quand’ella ti parrà soave
tanto, che sù andar ti fia leggero
com’a seconda giù andar per nave,

allor sarai al fin d’esto sentiero;
quivi di riposar l’affanno aspetta.
Più non rispondo, e questo so per vero”.

E com’elli ebbe sua parola detta,
una voce di presso sonò: “Forse
che di sedere in pria avrai distretta!”.

Al suon di lei ciascun di noi si torse,
e vedemmo a mancina un gran petrone,
del qual né io né ei prima s’accorse.

Là ci traemmo; e ivi eran persone
che si stavano a l’ombra dietro al sasso
come l’uom per negghienza a star si pone.

E un di lor, che mi sembiava lasso,
sedeva e abbracciava le ginocchia,
tenendo ‘l viso giù tra esse basso.

“O dolce segnor mio”, diss’io, “adocchia
colui che mostra sé più negligente
che se pigrizia fosse sua serocchia”.

Allor si volse a noi e puose mente,
movendo ‘l viso pur su per la coscia,
e disse: “Or va tu sù, che se’ valente!”.

Conobbi allor chi era, e quella angoscia
che m’avacciava un poco ancor la lena,
non m’impedì l’andare a lui; e poscia

ch’a lui fu’ giunto, alzò la testa a pena,
dicendo: “Hai ben veduto come ‘l sole
da l’omero sinistro il carro mena?”.

Li atti suoi pigri e le corte parole
mosser le labbra mie un poco a riso;
poi cominciai: “Belacqua, a me non dole

di te omai; ma dimmi: perché assiso
quiritto se’ ? attendi tu iscorta,
o pur lo modo usato t’ ha’ ripriso?”.

Ed elli: “O frate, andar in sù che porta?
ché non mi lascerebbe ire a’ martìri
l’angel di Dio che siede in su la porta.

Prima convien che tanto il ciel m’aggiri
di fuor da essa, quanto fece in vita,
perch’io ‘ndugiai al fine i buon sospiri,

se orazïone in prima non m’aita
che surga sù di cuor che in grazia viva;
l’altra che val, che ‘n ciel non è udita?”.

E già il poeta innanzi mi saliva,
e dicea: “Vienne omai; vedi ch’è tocco
meridïan dal sole, e a la riva

cuopre la notte già col piè Morrocco”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quinto

Canto V, ove si tratta de la terza qualitade, cioè di coloro che per cagione di vendicarsi d'alcuna ingiuria insino a la morte mettono in non calere di riconoscere sé esser peccatori e sodisfare a Dio; de li quali nomina in persona messer Iacopo da Fano, e Bonconte di Montefeltro.

Io era già da quell'ombre partito,
e seguitava l'orme del mio duca,
quando di retro a me, drizzando 'l dito,

una gridò: "Ve' che non par che luca
lo raggio da sinistra a quel di sotto,
e come vivo par che si conduca!".

Li occhi rivolsi al suon di questo motto,
e vidile guardar per maraviglia
pur me, pur me, e 'l lume ch'era rotto.

"Perché l'animo tuo tanto s'impiglia",
disse 'l maestro, "che l'andare allenti?
che ti fa ciò che quivi si pispiglia?

Vien dietro a me, e lascia dir le genti:
sta come torre ferma, che non crolla
già mai la cima per soffiar di venti;

ché sempre l'omo in cui pensier rampolla
sovra pensier, da sé dilunga il segno,
perché la foga l'un de l'altro insolla".

Che potea io ridir, se non "Io vegno"?
Dissilo, alquanto del color consperso
che fa l'uom di perdon talvolta degno.

E 'ntanto per la costa di traverso
venivan genti innanzi a noi un poco,
cantando 'Miserere' a verso a verso.

Quando s’accorser ch’i’ non dava loco
per lo mio corpo al trapassar d’i raggi,
mutar lor canto in un “oh!” lungo e roco;

e due di loro, in forma di messaggi,
corsero incontr’a noi e dimandarne:
“Di vostra condizion fatene saggi”.

E ‘l mio maestro: “Voi potete andarne
e ritrarre a color che vi mandaro
che ‘l corpo di costui è vera carne.

Se per veder la sua ombra restaro,
com’io avviso, assai è lor risposto:
fàccianli onore, ed esser può lor caro”.

Vapori accesi non vid’io sì tosto
di prima notte mai fender sereno,
né, sol calando, nuvole d’agosto,

che color non tornasser suso in meno;
e, giunti là, con li altri a noi dier volta,
come schiera che scorre sanza freno.

“Questa gente che preme a noi è molta,
e vegnonti a pregar”, disse ‘l poeta:
“però pur va, e in andando ascolta”.

“O anima che vai per esser lieta
con quelle membra con le quai nascesti”,
venian gridando, “un poco il passo queta.

Guarda s’alcun di noi unqua vedesti,
sì che di lui di là novella porti:
deh, perché vai? deh, perché non t’arresti?

Noi fummo tutti già per forza morti,
e peccatori infino a l’ultima ora;
quivi lume del ciel ne fece accorti,

sì che, pentendo e perdonando, fora
di vita uscimmo a Dio pacificati,
che del disio di sé veder n'accora". 57

E io: "Perché ne' vostri visi guati,
non riconosco alcun; ma s'a voi piace
cosa ch'io possa, spiriti ben nati, 60

voi dite, e io farò per quella pace
che, dietro a' piedi di sì fatta guida,
di mondo in mondo cercar mi si face". 63

E uno incominciò: "Ciascun si fida
del beneficio tuo sanza giurarlo,
pur che 'l voler nonpossa non ricida. 66

Ond'io, che solo innanzi a li altri parlo,
ti priego, se mai vedi quel paese
che siede tra Romagna e quel di Carlo, 69

che tu mi sie di tuoi prieghi cortese
in Fano, sì che ben per me s'adori
pur ch'i' possa purgar le gravi offese. 72

Quindi fu' io; ma li profondi fóri
ond'uscì 'l sangue in sul quale io sedea,
fatti mi fuoro in grembo a li Antenori, 75

là dov'io più sicuro esser credea:
quel da Esti il fé far, che m'avea in ira
assai più là che dritto non volea. 78

Ma s'io fosse fuggito inver' la Mira,
quando fu' sovragiunto ad Orïaco,
ancor sarei di là dove si spira. 81

Corsi al palude, e le cannucce e 'l braco
m'impigliar sì ch'i' caddi; e lì vid'io
de le mie vene farsi in terra laco". 84

Poi disse un altro: “Deh, se quel disio
si compia che ti tragge a l’alto monte,
con buona pïetate aiuta il mio!

Io fui di Montefeltro, io son Bonconte;
Giovanna o altri non ha di me cura;
per ch’io vo tra costor con bassa fronte”.

E io a lui: “Qual forza o qual ventura
ti travïò sì fuor di Campaldino,
che non si seppe mai tua sepultura?”.

“Oh!”, rispuos’elli, “a piè del Casentino
traversa un’acqua c’ ha nome l’Archiano,
che sovra l’Ermo nasce in Apennino.

Là ‘ve ‘l vocabol suo diventa vano,
arriva’ io forato ne la gola,
fuggendo a piede e sanguinando il piano.

Quivi perdei la vista e la parola;
nel nome di Maria fini’, e quivi
caddi, e rimase la mia carne sola.

Io dirò vero, e tu ‘l ridì tra ‘ vivi:
l’angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d’inferno
gridava: “O tu del ciel, perché mi privi?

Tu te ne porti di costui l’etterno
per una lagrimetta che ‘l mi toglie;
ma io farò de l’altro altro governo!”.

Ben sai come ne l’aere si raccoglie
quell’umido vapor che in acqua riede,
tosto che sale dove ‘l freddo il coglie.

Giunse quel mal voler che pur mal chiede
con lo ‘ntelletto, e mosse il fummo e ‘l vento
per la virtù che sua natura diede.

Indi la valle, come ‘l dì fu spento,
da Pratomagno al gran giogo coperse
di nebbia; e ‘l ciel di sopra fece intento,

sì che ‘l pregno aere in acqua si converse;
la pioggia cadde, e a’ fossati venne
di lei ciò che la terra non sofferse;

e come ai rivi grandi si convenne,
ver’ lo fiume real tanto veloce
si ruinò, che nulla la ritenne.

Lo corpo mio gelato in su la foce
trovò l’Archian rubesto; e quel sospinse
ne l’Arno, e sciolse al mio petto la croce

ch’i’ fe’ di me quando ‘l dolor mi vinse;
voltòmmi per le ripe e per lo fondo,
poi di sua preda mi coperse e cinse”.

“Deh, quando tu sarai tornato al mondo
e riposato de la lunga via”,
seguitò ‘l terzo spirito al secondo,

“ricorditi di me, che son la Pia;
Siena mi fé, disfecemi Maremma:
salsi colui che ‘nnanellata pria

disposando m’avea con la sua gemma”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto sesto

Canto VI, dove si tratta di quella medesima qualitade, dove si purga la predetta mala volontà di vendicare la ‘ngiuria, e per questo si ritarda sua confessione, e dove truova e nomina Sordello da Mantua.

Quando si parte il gioco de la zara,
colui che perde si riman dolente,
repetendo le volte, e tristo impara;

con l’altro se ne va tutta la gente;
qual va dinanzi, e qual di dietro il prende,
e qual dallato li si reca a mente;

el non s’arresta, e questo e quello intende;
a cui porge la man, più non fa pressa;
e così da la calca si difende.

Tal era io in quella turba spessa,
volgendo a loro, e qua e là, la faccia,
e promettendo mi sciogliea da essa.

Quiv’era l’Aretin che da le braccia
fiere di Ghin di Tacco ebbe la morte,
e l’altro ch’annegò correndo in caccia.

Quivi pregava con le mani sporte
Federigo Novello, e quel da Pisa
che fé parer lo buon Marzucco forte.

Vidi conte Orso e l’anima divisa
dal corpo suo per astio e per inveggia,
com’e’ dicea, non per colpa commisa;

Pier da la Broccia dico; e qui proveggia,
mentr’è di qua, la donna di Brabante,
sì che però non sia di peggior greggia.

Come libero fui da tutte quante
quell’ombre che pregar pur ch’altri prieghi,
sì che s’avacci lor divenir sante,

io cominciai: “El par che tu mi nieghi,
o luce mia, espresso in alcun testo
che decreto del cielo orazion pieghi;

e questa gente prega pur di questo:
sarebbe dunque loro speme vana,
o non m’è ‘l detto tuo ben manifesto?”.

Ed elli a me: “La mia scrittura è piana;
e la speranza di costor non falla,
se ben si guarda con la mente sana;

ché cima di giudicio non s’avvalla
perché foco d’amor compia in un punto
ciò che de’ sodisfar chi qui s’astalla;

e là dov’io fermai cotesto punto,
non s’ammendava, per pregar, difetto,
perché ‘l priego da Dio era disgiunto.

Veramente a così alto sospetto
non ti fermar, se quella nol ti dice
che lume fia tra ‘l vero e lo ‘ntelletto.

Non so se ‘ntendi: io dico di Beatrice;
tu la vedrai di sopra, in su la vetta
di questo monte, ridere e felice”.

E io: “Segnore, andiamo a maggior fretta,
ché già non m’affatico come dianzi,
e vedi omai che ‘l poggio l’ombra getta”.

“Noi anderem con questo giorno innanzi”,
rispuose, “quanto più potremo omai;
ma ‘l fatto è d’altra forma che non stanzi.

Prima che sie là sù, tornar vedrai
colui che già si cuopre de la costa,
sì che ‘ suoi raggi tu romper non fai.

Ma vedi là un’anima che, posta
sola soletta, inverso noi riguarda:
quella ne ‘nsegnerà la via più tosta”.

Venimmo a lei: o anima lombarda,
come ti stavi altera e disdegnosa
e nel mover de li occhi onesta e tarda!

Ella non ci dicëa alcuna cosa,
ma lasciavane gir, solo sguardando
a guisa di leon quando si posa.

Pur Virgilio si trasse a lei, pregando
che ne mostrasse la miglior salita;
e quella non rispuose al suo dimando,

ma di nostro paese e de la vita
ci ‘nchiese; e ‘l dolce duca incominciava
“Mantüa ...”, e l’ombra, tutta in sé romita,

surse ver’ lui del loco ove pria stava,
dicendo: “O Mantoano, io son Sordello
de la tua terra!”; e l’un l’altro abbracciava.

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello,
nave sanza nocchiere in gran tempesta,
non donna di provincie, ma bordello!

Quell’anima gentil fu così presta,
sol per lo dolce suon de la sua terra,
di fare al cittadin suo quivi festa;

e ora in te non stanno sanza guerra
li vivi tuoi, e l’un l’altro si rode
di quei ch’un muro e una fossa serra.

Cerca, misera, intorno da le prode
le tue marine, e poi ti guarda in seno,
s’alcuna parte in te di pace gode.

Che val perché ti racconciasse il freno
Iustinïano, se la sella è vòta?
Sanz’esso fora la vergogna meno.

Ahi gente che dovresti esser devota,
e lasciar seder Cesare in la sella,
se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota,

guarda come esta fiera è fatta fella
per non esser corretta da li sproni,
poi che ponesti mano a la predella.

O Alberto tedesco ch’abbandoni
costei ch’è fatta indomita e selvaggia,
e dovresti inforcar li suoi arcioni,

giusto giudicio da le stelle caggia
sovra ‘l tuo sangue, e sia novo e aperto,
tal che ‘l tuo successor temenza n’aggia!

Ch’avete tu e ‘l tuo padre sofferto,
per cupidigia di costà distretti,
che ‘l giardin de lo ‘mperio sia diserto.

Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappelletti,
Monaldi e Filippeschi, uom sanza cura:
color già tristi, e questi con sospetti!

Vien, crudel, vieni, e vedi la pressura
d’i tuoi gentili, e cura lor magagne;
e vedrai Santafior com’è oscura!

Vieni a veder la tua Roma che piagne
vedova e sola, e dì e notte chiama:
“Cesare mio, perché non m’accompagne?”.

Vieni a veder la gente quanto s’ama!
e se nulla di noi pietà ti move,
a vergognar ti vien de la tua fama.

E se licito m’è, o sommo Giove
che fosti in terra per noi crucifisso,
son li giusti occhi tuoi rivolti altrove?

O è preparazion che ne l’abisso
del tuo consiglio fai per alcun bene
in tutto de l’accorger nostro scisso?

Ché le città d’Italia tutte piene
son di tiranni, e un Marcel diventa
ogne villan che parteggiando viene.

Fiorenza mia, ben puoi esser contenta
di questa digression che non ti tocca,
mercé del popol tuo che si argomenta.

Molti han giustizia in cuore, e tardi scocca
per non venir sanza consiglio a l’arco;
ma il popol tuo l’ ha in sommo de la bocca.

Molti rifiutan lo comune incarco;
ma il popol tuo solicito risponde
sanza chiamare, e grida: “I’ mi sobbarco!”.

Or ti fa lieta, ché tu hai ben onde:
tu ricca, tu con pace e tu con senno!
S’io dico ‘l ver, l’effetto nol nasconde.

Atene e Lacedemona, che fenno
l’antiche leggi e furon sì civili,
fecero al viver bene un picciol cenno

verso di te, che fai tanto sottili
provedimenti, ch’a mezzo novembre
non giugne quel che tu d’ottobre fili.

Quante volte, del tempo che rimembre,
legge, moneta, officio e costume
hai tu mutato, e rinovate membre!

E se ben ti ricordi e vedi lume,
vedrai te somigliante a quella inferma
che non può trovar posa in su le piume,

ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto settimo

Canto VII, dove si purga la quarta qualitade di coloro che, per propria negligenza, di die in die di qui a l'ultimo giorno di loro vita tardaro indebitamente loro confessione; li quali si purgano in uno vallone intra fiori ed erbe; dove nomina il re Carlo e molti altri.

Poscia che l'accoglienze oneste e liete
furo iterate tre e quattro volte,
Sordel si trasse, e disse: "Voi, chi siete?". 3

"Anzi che a questo monte fosser volte
l'anime degne di salire a Dio,
fur l'ossa mie per Ottavian sepolte. 6

Io son Virgilio; e per null'altro rio
lo ciel perdei che per non aver fé".
Così rispuose allora il duca mio. 9

Qual è colui che cosa innanzi sé
sùbita vede ond'e' si maraviglia,
che crede e non, dicendo "Ella è ... non è ...", 12

tal parve quelli; e poi chinò le ciglia,
e umilmente ritornò ver' lui,
e abbracciòl là 've 'l minor s'appiglia. 15

"O gloria di Latin", disse, "per cui
mostrò ciò che potea la lingua nostra,
o pregio etterno del loco ond'io fui, 18

qual merito o qual grazia mi ti mostra?
S'io son d'udir le tue parole degno,
dimmi se vien d'inferno, e di qual chiostra". 21

"Per tutt'i cerchi del dolente regno",
rispuose lui, "son io di qua venuto;
virtù del ciel mi mosse, e con lei vegno. 24

Non per far, ma per non fare ho perduto
a veder l’alto Sol che tu disiri
e che fu tardi per me conosciuto. 27

Luogo è là giù non tristo di martìri,
ma di tenebre solo, ove i lamenti
non suonan come guai, ma son sospiri. 30

Quivi sto io coi pargoli innocenti
dai denti morsi de la morte avante
che fosser da l’umana colpa essenti; 33

quivi sto io con quei che le tre sante
virtù non si vestiro, e sanza vizio
conobber l’altre e seguir tutte quante. 36

Ma se tu sai e puoi, alcuno indizio
dà noi per che venir possiam più tosto
là dove purgatorio ha dritto inizio”. 39

Rispuose: “Loco certo non c’è posto;
licito m’è andar suso e intorno;
per quanto ir posso, a guida mi t’accosto. 42

Ma vedi già come dichina il giorno,
e andar sù di notte non si puote;
però è buon pensar di bel soggiorno. 45

Anime sono a destra qua remote;
se mi consenti, io ti merrò ad esse,
e non sanza diletto ti fier note”. 48

“Com’è ciò?”, fu risposto. “Chi volesse
salir di notte, fora elli impedito
d’altrui, o non sarria ché non potesse?”. 51

E ‘l buon Sordello in terra fregò ‘l dito,
dicendo: “Vedi? sola questa riga
non varcheresti dopo ‘l sol partito: 54

non però ch’altra cosa desse briga,
che la notturna tenebra, ad ir suso;
quella col nonpoder la voglia intriga.

Ben si poria con lei tornare in giuso
e passeggiar la costa intorno errando,
mentre che l’orizzonte il dì tien chiuso”.

Allora il mio segnor, quasi ammirando,
“Menane”, disse, “dunque là ‘ve dici
ch’aver si può diletto dimorando”.

Poco allungati c’eravam di lici,
quand’io m’accorsi che ‘l monte era scemo,
a guisa che i vallon li sceman quici.

“Colà”, disse quell’ombra, “n’anderemo
dove la costa face di sé grembo;
e là il novo giorno attenderemo”.

Tra erto e piano era un sentiero schembo,
che ne condusse in fianco de la lacca,
là dove più ch’a mezzo muore il lembo.

Oro e argento fine, cocco e biacca,
indaco, legno lucido e sereno,
fresco smeraldo in l’ora che si fiacca,

da l’erba e da li fior, dentr’a quel seno
posti, ciascun saria di color vinto,
come dal suo maggiore è vinto il meno.

Non avea pur natura ivi dipinto,
ma di soavità di mille odori
vi facea uno incognito e indistinto.

‘Salve, Regina’ in sul verde e ‘n su’ fiori
quindi seder cantando anime vidi,
che per la valle non parean di fuori.

“Prima che ‘l poco sole omai s’annidi”,
cominciò ‘l Mantoan che ci avea vòlti,
“tra color non vogliate ch’io vi guidi.

Di questo balzo meglio li atti e ‘ volti
conoscerete voi di tutti quanti,
che ne la lama giù tra essi accolti.

Colui che più siede alto e fa sembianti
d’aver negletto ciò che far dovea,
e che non move bocca a li altrui canti,

Rodolfo imperador fu, che potea
sanar le piaghe c’ hanno Italia morta,
sì che tardi per altri si ricrea.

L’altro che ne la vista lui conforta,
resse la terra dove l’acqua nasce
che Molta in Albia, e Albia in mar ne porta:

Ottacchero ebbe nome, e ne le fasce
fu meglio assai che Vincislao suo figlio
barbuto, cui lussuria e ozio pasce.

E quel nasetto che stretto a consiglio
par con colui c’ ha sì benigno aspetto,
morì fuggendo e disfiorando il giglio:

guardate là come si batte il petto!
L’altro vedete c’ ha fatto a la guancia
de la sua palma, sospirando, letto.

Padre e suocero son del mal di Francia:
sanno la vita sua viziata e lorda,
e quindi viene il duol che sì li lancia.

Quel che par sì membruto e che s’accorda,
cantando, con colui dal maschio naso,
d’ogne valor portò cinta la corda;

e se re dopo lui fosse rimaso
lo giovanetto che retro a lui siede,
ben andava il valor di vaso in vaso,

che non si puote dir de l'altre rede;
Iacomo e Federigo hanno i reami;
del retaggio miglior nessun possiede.

Rade volte risurge per li rami
l'umana probitate; e questo vole
quei che la dà, perché da lui si chiami.

Anche al nasuto vanno mie parole
non men ch'a l'altro, Pier, che con lui canta,
onde Puglia e Proenza già si dole.

Tant'è del seme suo minor la pianta,
quanto, più che Beatrice e Margherita,
Costanza di marito ancor si vanta.

Vedete il re de la semplice vita
seder là solo, Arrigo d'Inghilterra:
questi ha ne' rami suoi migliore uscita.

Quel che più basso tra costor s'atterra,
guardando in suso, è Guiglielmo marchese,
per cui e Alessandria e la sua guerra

fa pianger Monferrato e Canavese".

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto ottavo

Canto VIII, dove si tratta de la quinta qualitade, cioè di coloro che, per timore di non perdere onore e signoria e offizi e massimamente per non ritrarre le mani da l'utilità de la pecunia, si tardaro a confessare di qui a l'ultima ora di loro vita e non faccendo penitenza di lor peccati; dove nomina iudice Nino e Currado marchese Malespini.

Era già l'ora che volge il disio
ai navicanti e 'ntenerisce il core
lo dì c' han detto ai dolci amici addio;

e che lo novo peregrin d'amore
punge, se ode squilla di lontano
che paia il giorno pianger che si more;

quand'io incominciai a render vano
l'udire e a mirare una de l'alme
surta, che l'ascoltar chiedea con mano.

Ella giunse e levò ambo le palme,
ficcando li occhi verso l'orïente,
come dicesse a Dio: 'D'altro non calme'.

'Te lucis ante' sì devotamente
le uscìo di bocca e con sì dolci note,
che fece me a me uscir di mente;

e l'altre poi dolcemente e devote
seguitar lei per tutto l'inno intero,
avendo li occhi a le superne rote.

Aguzza qui, lettor, ben li occhi al vero,
ché 'l velo è ora ben tanto sottile,
certo che 'l trapassar dentro è leggero.

Io vidi quello essercito gentile
tacito poscia riguardare in sùe,
quasi aspettando, palido e umìle;

e vidi uscir de l’alto e scender giùe
due angeli con due spade affocate,
tronche e private de le punte sue. 27

Verdi come fogliette pur mo nate
erano in veste, che da verdi penne
percosse traean dietro e ventilate. 30

L’un poco sovra noi a star si venne,
e l’altro scese in l’opposita sponda,
sì che la gente in mezzo si contenne. 33

Ben discernëa in lor la testa bionda;
ma ne la faccia l’occhio si smarria,
come virtù ch’a troppo si confonda. 36

“Ambo vegnon del grembo di Maria”,
disse Sordello, “a guardia de la valle,
per lo serpente che verrà vie via”. 39

Ond’io, che non sapeva per qual calle,
mi volsi intorno, e stretto m’accostai,
tutto gelato, a le fidate spalle. 42

E Sordello anco: “Or avvalliamo omai
tra le grandi ombre, e parleremo ad esse;
grazïoso fia lor vedervi assai”. 45

Solo tre passi credo ch’i’ scendesse,
e fui di sotto, e vidi un che mirava
pur me, come conoscer mi volesse. 48

Temp’era già che l’aere s’annerava,
ma non sì che tra li occhi suoi e ‘ miei
non dichiarisse ciò che pria serrava. 51

Ver’ me si fece, e io ver’ lui mi fei:
giudice Nin gentil, quanto mi piacque
quando ti vidi non esser tra ‘ rei! 54

Nullo bel salutar tra noi si tacque;
poi dimandò: “Quant’è che tu venisti
a piè del monte per le lontane acque?”.

“Oh!”, diss’io lui, “per entro i luoghi tristi
venni stamane, e sono in prima vita,
ancor che l’altra, sì andando, acquisti”.

E come fu la mia risposta udita,
Sordello ed elli in dietro si raccolse
come gente di sùbito smarrita.

L’uno a Virgilio e l’altro a un si volse
che sedea lì, gridando: “Sù, Currado!
vieni a veder che Dio per grazia volse”.

Poi, vòlto a me: “Per quel singular grado
che tu dei a colui che sì nasconde
lo suo primo perché, che non lì è guado,

quando sarai di là da le larghe onde,
dì a Giovanna mia che per me chiami
là dove a li ‘nnocenti si risponde.

Non credo che la sua madre più m’ami,
poscia che trasmutò le bianche bende,
le quai convien che, misera!, ancor brami.

Per lei assai di lieve si comprende
quanto in femmina foco d’amor dura,
se l’occhio o ‘l tatto spesso non l’accende.

Non le farà sì bella sepultura
la vipera che Melanesi accampa,
com’avria fatto il gallo di Gallura”.

Così dicea, segnato de la stampa,
nel suo aspetto, di quel dritto zelo
che misuratamente in core avvampa.

Li occhi miei ghiotti andavan pur al cielo,
pur là dove le stelle son più tarde,
sì come rota più presso a lo stelo.

E ‘l duca mio: “Figliuol, che là sù guarde?”.
E io a lui: “A quelle tre facelle
di che ‘l polo di qua tutto quanto arde”.

Ond’elli a me: “Le quattro chiare stelle
che vedevi staman, son di là basse,
e queste son salite ov’eran quelle”.

Com’ei parlava, e Sordello a sé il trasse
dicendo: “Vedi là ‘l nostro avversaro”;
e drizzò il dito perché ‘n là guardasse.

Da quella parte onde non ha riparo
la picciola vallea, era una biscia,
forse qual diede ad Eva il cibo amaro.

Tra l’erba e ‘ fior venìa la mala striscia,
volgendo ad ora ad or la testa, e ‘l dosso
leccando come bestia che si liscia.

Io non vidi, e però dicer non posso,
come mosser li astor celestïali;
ma vidi bene e l’uno e l’altro mosso.

Sentendo fender l’aere a le verdi ali,
fuggì ‘l serpente, e li angeli dier volta,
suso a le poste rivolando iguali.

L’ombra che s’era al giudice raccolta
quando chiamò, per tutto quello assalto
punto non fu da me guardare sciolta.

“Se la lucerna che ti mena in alto
truovi nel tuo arbitrio tanta cera
quant’è mestiere infino al sommo smalto”,

cominciò ella, “se novella vera
di Val di Magra o di parte vicina
sai, dillo a me, che già grande là era.

Fui chiamato Currado Malaspina;
non son l’antico, ma di lui discesi;
a’ miei portai l’amor che qui raffina”.

“Oh!”, diss’io lui, “per li vostri paesi
già mai non fui; ma dove si dimora
per tutta Europa ch’ei non sien palesi?

La fama che la vostra casa onora,
grida i segnori e grida la contrada,
sì che ne sa chi non vi fu ancora;

e io vi giuro, s’io di sopra vada,
che vostra gente onrata non si sfregia
del pregio de la borsa e de la spada.

Uso e natura sì la privilegia,
che, perché il capo reo il mondo torca,
sola va dritta e ‘l mal cammin dispregia”.

Ed elli: “Or va; che ‘l sol non si ricorca
sette volte nel letto che ‘l Montone
con tutti e quattro i piè cuopre e inforca,

che cotesta cortese oppinïone
ti fia chiavata in mezzo de la testa
con maggior chiovi che d’altrui sermone,

se corso di giudicio non s’arresta”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto nono

Canto IX, nel quale pone l'auttore uno suo significativo sogno; e poi come pervennero a l'entrata del purgatorio proprio, descrivendo come ne l'entrata di purgatorio trovoe uno angelo che con la punta de la spada che portava in mano scrisse ne la fronte di Dante sette P.

La concubina di Titone antico
già s'imbiancava al balco d'orïente,
fuor de le braccia del suo dolce amico;

di gemme la sua fronte era lucente,
poste in figura del freddo animale
che con la coda percuote la gente;

e la notte, de' passi con che sale,
fatti avea due nel loco ov'eravamo,
e 'l terzo già chinava in giuso l'ale;

quand'io, che meco avea di quel d'Adamo,
vinto dal sonno, in su l'erba inchinai
là 've già tutti e cinque sedavamo.

Ne l'ora che comincia i tristi lai
la rondinella presso a la mattina,
forse a memoria de' suo' primi guai,

e che la mente nostra, peregrina
più da la carne e men da' pensier presa,
a le sue visïon quasi è divina,

in sogno mi parea veder sospesa
un'aguglia nel ciel con penne d'oro,
con l'ali aperte e a calare intesa;

ed esser mi parea là dove fuoro
abbandonati i suoi da Ganimede,
quando fu ratto al sommo consistoro.

Fra me pensava: ‘Forse questa fiede
pur qui per uso, e forse d’altro loco
disdegna di portarne suso in piede’. 27

Poi mi parea che, poi rotata un poco,
terribil come folgor discendesse,
e me rapisse suso infino al foco. 30

Ivi parea che ella e io ardesse;
e sì lo ‘ncendio imaginato cosse,
che convenne che ‘l sonno si rompesse. 33

Non altrimenti Achille si riscosse,
li occhi svegliati rivolgendo in giro
e non sappiendo là dove si fosse, 36

quando la madre da Chirón a Schiro
trafuggò lui dormendo in le sue braccia,
là onde poi li Greci il dipartiro; 39

che mi scoss’io, sì come da la faccia
mi fuggì ‘l sonno, e diventa’ ismorto,
come fa l’uom che, spaventato, agghiaccia. 42

Dallato m’era solo il mio conforto,
e ‘l sole er’alto già più che due ore,
e ‘l viso m’era a la marina torto. 45

“Non aver tema”, disse il mio segnore;
“fatti sicur, ché noi semo a buon punto;
non stringer, ma rallarga ogne vigore. 48

Tu se’ omai al purgatorio giunto:
vedi là il balzo che ‘l chiude dintorno;
vedi l’entrata là ‘ve par digiunto. 51

Dianzi, ne l’alba che procede al giorno,
quando l’anima tua dentro dormia,
sovra li fiori ond’è là giù addorno 54

venne una donna, e disse: “I’ son Lucia;
lasciatemi pigliar costui che dorme;
sì l’agevolerò per la sua via”.

Sordel rimase e l’altre genti forme;
ella ti tolse, e come ‘l dì fu chiaro,
sen venne suso; e io per le sue orme.

Qui ti posò, ma pria mi dimostraro
li occhi suoi belli quella intrata aperta;
poi ella e ‘l sonno ad una se n’andaro”.

A guisa d’uom che ‘n dubbio si raccerta
e che muta in conforto sua paura,
poi che la verità li è discoperta,

mi cambia’ io; e come sanza cura
vide me ‘l duca mio, su per lo balzo
si mosse, e io di rietro inver’ l’altura.

Lettor, tu vedi ben com’io innalzo
la mia matera, e però con più arte
non ti maravigliar s’io la rincalzo.

Noi ci appressammo, ed eravamo in parte
che là dove pareami prima rotto,
pur come un fesso che muro diparte,

vidi una porta, e tre gradi di sotto
per gire ad essa, di color diversi,
e un portier ch’ancor non facea motto.

E come l’occhio più e più v’apersi,
vidil seder sovra ‘l grado sovrano,
tal ne la faccia ch’io non lo soffersi;

e una spada nuda avëa in mano,
che reflettëa i raggi sì ver’ noi,
ch’io dirizzava spesso il viso in vano.

“Dite costinci: che volete voi?”,
cominciò elli a dire, “ov’è la scorta?
Guardate che ‘l venir sù non vi nòi”.

“Donna del ciel, di queste cose accorta”,
rispuose ‘l mio maestro a lui, “pur dianzi
ne disse: “Andate là: quivi è la porta”“.

“Ed ella i passi vostri in bene avanzi”,
ricominciò il cortese portinaio:
“Venite dunque a’ nostri gradi innanzi”.

Là ne venimmo; e lo scaglion primaio
bianco marmo era sì pulito e terso,
ch’io mi specchiai in esso qual io paio.

Era il secondo tinto più che perso,
d’una petrina ruvida e arsiccia,
crepata per lo lungo e per traverso.

Lo terzo, che di sopra s’ammassiccia,
porfido mi parea, sì fiammeggiante
come sangue che fuor di vena spiccia.

Sovra questo tenëa ambo le piante
l’angel di Dio sedendo in su la soglia
che mi sembiava pietra di diamante.

Per li tre gradi sù di buona voglia
mi trasse il duca mio, dicendo: “Chiedi
umilemente che ‘l serrame scioglia”.

Divoto mi gittai a’ santi piedi;
misericordia chiesi e ch’el m’aprisse,
ma tre volte nel petto pria mi diedi.

Sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse
col punton de la spada, e “Fa che lavi,
quando se’ dentro, queste piaghe” disse.

Cenere, o terra che secca si cavi,
d’un color fora col suo vestimento;
e di sotto da quel trasse due chiavi.

L’una era d’oro e l’altra era d’argento;
pria con la bianca e poscia con la gialla
fece a la porta sì, ch’i’ fu’ contento.

“Quandunque l’una d’este chiavi falla,
che non si volga dritta per la toppa”,
diss’elli a noi, “non s’apre questa calla.

Più cara è l’una; ma l’altra vuol troppa
d’arte e d’ingegno avanti che diserri,
perch’ella è quella che ‘l nodo digroppa.

Da Pier le tegno; e dissemi ch’i’ erri
anzi ad aprir ch’a tenerla serrata,
pur che la gente a’ piedi mi s’atterri”.

Poi pinse l’uscio a la porta sacrata,
dicendo: “Intrate; ma facciovi accorti
che di fuor torna chi ‘n dietro si guata”.

E quando fuor ne’ cardini distorti
li spigoli di quella regge sacra,
che di metallo son sonanti e forti,

non rugghiò sì né si mostrò sì acra
Tarpëa, come tolto le fu il buono
Metello, per che poi rimase macra.

Io mi rivolsi attento al primo tuono,
e ‘Te Deum laudamus’ mi parea
udire in voce mista al dolce suono.

Tale imagine a punto mi rendea
ciò ch’io udiva, qual prender si suole
quando a cantar con organi si stea;

ch’or sì or no s’intendon le parole.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto decimo

Canto X, dove si tratta del primo girone del proprio purgatorio, il quale luogo discrive l'auttore sotto certi intagli d'antiche imagini; e qui si purga la colpa de la superbia.

Poi fummo dentro al soglio de la porta
che 'l mal amor de l'anime disusa,
perché fa parer dritta la via torta,

sonando la senti' esser richiusa;
e s'io avesse li occhi vòlti ad essa,
qual fora stata al fallo degna scusa?

Noi salavam per una pietra fessa,
che si moveva e d'una e d'altra parte,
sì come l'onda che fugge e s'appressa.

"Qui si conviene usare un poco d'arte",
cominciò 'l duca mio, "in accostarsi
or quinci, or quindi al lato che si parte".

E questo fece i nostri passi scarsi,
tanto che pria lo scemo de la luna
rigiunse al letto suo per ricorcarsi,

che noi fossimo fuor di quella cruna;
ma quando fummo liberi e aperti
sù dove il monte in dietro si rauna,

ïo stancato e amendue incerti
di nostra via, restammo in su un piano
solingo più che strade per diserti.

Da la sua sponda, ove confina il vano,
al piè de l'alta ripa che pur sale,
misurrebbe in tre volte un corpo umano;

e quanto l’occhio mio potea trar d’ale,
or dal sinistro e or dal destro fianco,
questa cornice mi parea cotale. 27

Là sù non eran mossi i piè nostri anco,
quand’io conobbi quella ripa intorno
che dritto di salita aveva manco, 30

esser di marmo candido e addorno
d’intagli sì, che non pur Policleto,
ma la natura lì avrebbe scorno. 33

L’angel che venne in terra col decreto
de la molt’anni lagrimata pace,
ch’aperse il ciel del suo lungo divieto, 36

dinanzi a noi pareva sì verace
quivi intagliato in un atto soave,
che non sembiava imagine che tace. 39

Giurato si saria ch’el dicesse ‘Ave!’;
perché iv’era imaginata quella
ch’ad aprir l’alto amor volse la chiave; 42

e avea in atto impressa esta favella
‘Ecce ancilla Deï’, propriamente
come figura in cera si suggella. 45

“Non tener pur ad un loco la mente”,
disse ‘l dolce maestro, che m’avea
da quella parte onde ‘l cuore ha la gente. 48

Per ch’i’ mi mossi col viso, e vedea
di retro da Maria, da quella costa
onde m’era colui che mi movea, 51

un’altra storia ne la roccia imposta;
per ch’io varcai Virgilio, e fe’ mi presso,
acciò che fosse a li occhi miei disposta. 54

Era intagliato lì nel marmo stesso
lo carro e ‘ buoi, traendo l’arca santa,
per che si teme officio non commesso.

Dinanzi parea gente; e tutta quanta,
partita in sette cori, a’ due mie’ sensi
faceva dir l’un ‘No’, l’altro ‘Sì, canta’.

Similemente al fummo de li ‘ncensi
che v’era imaginato, li occhi e ‘l naso
e al sì e al no discordi fensi.

Lì precedeva al benedetto vaso,
trescando alzato, l’umile salmista,
e più e men che re era in quel caso.

Di contra, effigïata ad una vista
d’un gran palazzo, Micòl ammirava
sì come donna dispettosa e trista.

I’ mossi i piè del loco dov’io stava,
per avvisar da presso un’altra istoria,
che di dietro a Micòl mi biancheggiava.

Quiv’era storïata l’alta gloria
del roman principato, il cui valore
mosse Gregorio a la sua gran vittoria;

i’ dico di Traiano imperadore;
e una vedovella li era al freno,
di lagrime atteggiata e di dolore.

Intorno a lui parea calcato e pieno
di cavalieri, e l’aguglie ne l’oro
sovr’essi in vista al vento si movieno.

La miserella intra tutti costoro
pareva dir: “Segnor, fammi vendetta
di mio figliuol ch’è morto, ond’io m’accoro”;

ed elli a lei rispondere: “Or aspetta
tanto ch’i’ torni”; e quella: “Segnor mio”,
come persona in cui dolor s’affretta,

“se tu non torni?”; ed ei: “Chi fia dov’io,
la ti farà”; ed ella: “L’altrui bene
a te che fia, se ‘l tuo metti in oblio?”;

ond’elli: “Or ti conforta; ch’ei convene
ch’i’ solva il mio dovere anzi ch’i’ mova:
giustizia vuole e pietà mi ritene”.

Colui che mai non vide cosa nova
produsse esto visibile parlare,
novello a noi perché qui non si trova.

Mentr’io mi dilettava di guardare
l’imagini di tante umilitadi,
e per lo fabbro loro a veder care,

“Ecco di qua, ma fanno i passi radi”,
mormorava il poeta, “molte genti:
questi ne ‘nvïeranno a li alti gradi”.

Li occhi miei, ch’a mirare eran contenti
per veder novitadi ond’e’ son vaghi,
volgendosi ver’ lui non furon lenti.

Non vo’ però, lettor, che tu ti smaghi
di buon proponimento per udire
come Dio vuol che ‘l debito si paghi.

Non attender la forma del martìre:
pensa la succession; pensa ch’al peggio
oltre la gran sentenza non può ire.

Io cominciai: “Maestro, quel ch’io veggio
muovere a noi, non mi sembian persone,
e non so che, sì nel veder vaneggio”.

Ed elli a me: “La grave condizione
di lor tormento a terra li rannicchia,
sì che ‘ miei occhi pria n’ebber tencione.

Ma guarda fiso là, e disviticchia
col viso quel che vien sotto a quei sassi:
già scorger puoi come ciascun si picchia”.

O superbi cristian, miseri lassi,
che, de la vista de la mente infermi,
fidanza avete ne’ retrosi passi,

non v’accorgete voi che noi siam vermi
nati a formar l’angelica farfalla,
che vola a la giustizia sanza schermi?

Di che l’animo vostro in alto galla,
poi siete quasi antomata in difetto,
sì come vermo in cui formazion falla?

Come per sostentar solaio o tetto,
per mensola talvolta una figura
si vede giugner le ginocchia al petto,

la qual fa del non ver vera rancura
nascere ‘n chi la vede; così fatti
vid’io color, quando puosi ben cura.

Vero è che più e meno eran contratti
secondo ch’avien più e meno a dosso;
e qual più pazïenza avea ne li atti,

piangendo parea dicer: ‘Più non posso’.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto undicesimo

Canto XI, nel quale si tratta del sopradetto primo girone e de' superbi medesimi, e qui si purga la vana gloria ch'è uno de' rami de la superbia; dove nomina il conte Uberto da Santafiore e messer Provenzano Salvani di Siena e molti altri.

"O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai,
non circunscritto, ma per più amore
ch'ai primi effetti di là sù tu hai,

laudato sia 'l tuo nome e 'l tuo valore
da ogne creatura, com'è degno
di render grazie al tuo dolce vapore.

Vegna ver' noi la pace del tuo regno,
ché noi ad essa non potem da noi,
s'ella non vien, con tutto nostro ingegno.

Come del suo voler li angeli tuoi
fan sacrificio a te, cantando osanna,
così facciano li uomini de' suoi.

Dà oggi a noi la cotidiana manna,
sanza la qual per questo aspro diserto
a retro va chi più di gir s'affanna.

E come noi lo mal ch'avem sofferto
perdoniamo a ciascuno, e tu perdona
benigno, e non guardar lo nostro merto.

Nostra virtù che di legger s'adona,
non spermentar con l'antico avversaro,
ma libera da lui che sì la sprona.

Quest'ultima preghiera, segnor caro,
già non si fa per noi, ché non bisogna,
ma per color che dietro a noi restaro".

Così a sé e noi buona ramogna
quell’ombre orando, andavan sotto ‘l pondo,
simile a quel che talvolta si sogna,

disparmente angosciate tutte a tondo
e lasse su per la prima cornice,
purgando la caligine del mondo.

Se di là sempre ben per noi si dice,
di qua che dire e far per lor si puote
da quei c’ hanno al voler buona radice?

Ben si de’ loro atar lavar le note
che portar quinci, sì che, mondi e lievi,
possano uscire a le stellate ruote.

“Deh, se giustizia e pietà vi disgrievi
tosto, sì che possiate muover l’ala,
che secondo il disio vostro vi lievi,

mostrate da qual mano inver’ la scala
si va più corto; e se c’è più d’un varco,
quel ne ‘nsegnate che men erto cala;

ché questi che vien meco, per lo ‘ncarco
de la carne d’Adamo onde si veste,
al montar sù, contra sua voglia, è parco”.

Le lor parole, che rendero a queste
che dette avea colui cu’ io seguiva,
non fur da cui venisser manifeste;

ma fu detto: “A man destra per la riva
con noi venite, e troverete il passo
possibile a salir persona viva.

E s’io non fossi impedito dal sasso
che la cervice mia superba doma,
onde portar convienmi il viso basso,

cotesti, ch’ancor vive e non si noma,
guardere’ io, per veder s’i’ ‘l conosco,
e per farlo pietoso a questa soma.

Io fui latino e nato d’un gran Tosco:
Guiglielmo Aldobrandesco fu mio padre;
non so se ‘l nome suo già mai fu vosco.

L’antico sangue e l’opere leggiadre
d’i miei maggior mi fer sì arrogante,
che, non pensando a la comune madre,

ogn’uomo ebbi in despetto tanto avante,
ch’io ne mori’, come i Sanesi sanno,
e sallo in Campagnatico ogne fante.

Io sono Omberto; e non pur a me danno
superbia fa, ché tutti miei consorti
ha ella tratti seco nel malanno.

E qui convien ch’io questo peso porti
per lei, tanto che a Dio si sodisfaccia,
poi ch’io nol fe’ tra ‘ vivi, qui tra ‘ morti”.

Ascoltando chinai in giù la faccia;
e un di lor, non questi che parlava,
si torse sotto il peso che li ‘mpaccia,

e videmi e conobbemi e chiamava,
tenendo li occhi con fatica fisi
a me che tutto chin con loro andava.

“Oh!”, diss’io lui, “non se’ tu Oderisi,
l’onor d’Agobbio e l’onor di quell’arte
ch’alluminar chiamata è in Parisi?”.

“Frate”, diss’elli, “più ridon le carte
che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese;
l’onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte.

Ben non sare' io stato sì cortese
mentre ch'io vissi, per lo gran disio
de l'eccellenza ove mio core intese.

Di tal superbia qui si paga il fio;
e ancor non sarei qui, se non fosse
che, possendo peccar, mi volsi a Dio.

Oh vana gloria de l'umane posse!
com' poco verde in su la cima dura,
se non è giunta da l'etati grosse!

Credette Cimabue ne la pittura
tener lo campo, e ora ha Giotto il grido,
sì che la fama di colui è scura.

Così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido
la gloria de la lingua; e forse è nato
chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido.

Non è il mondan romore altro ch'un fiato
di vento, ch'or vien quinci e or vien quindi,
e muta nome perché muta lato.

Che voce avrai tu più, se vecchia scindi
da te la carne, che se fossi morto
anzi che tu lasciassi il 'pappo' e 'l 'dindi',

pria che passin mill'anni? ch'è più corto
spazio a l'etterno, ch'un muover di ciglia
al cerchio che più tardi in cielo è torto.

Colui che del cammin sì poco piglia
dinanzi a me, Toscana sonò tutta;
e ora a pena in Siena sen pispiglia,

ond'era sire quando fu distrutta
la rabbia fiorentina, che superba
fu a quel tempo sì com'ora è putta.

La vostra nominanza è color d’erba,
che viene e va, e quei la discolora
per cui ella esce de la terra acerba”.

E io a lui: “Tuo vero dir m’incora
bona umiltà, e gran tumor m’appiani;
ma chi è quei di cui tu parlavi ora?”.

“Quelli è”, rispuose, “Provenzan Salvani;
ed è qui perché fu presuntüoso
a recar Siena tutta a le sue mani.

Ito è così e va, sanza riposo,
poi che morì; cotal moneta rende
a sodisfar chi è di là troppo oso”.

E io: “Se quello spirito ch’attende,
pria che si penta, l’orlo de la vita,
qua giù dimora e qua sù non ascende,

se buona orazïon lui non aita,
prima che passi tempo quanto visse,
come fu la venuta lui largita?”.

“Quando vivea più glorïoso”, disse,
“liberamente nel Campo di Siena,
ogne vergogna diposta, s’affisse;

e lì, per trar l’amico suo di pena,
ch’e’ sostenea ne la prigion di Carlo,
si condusse a tremar per ogne vena.

Più non dirò, e scuro so che parlo;
ma poco tempo andrà, che ‘ tuoi vicini
faranno sì che tu potrai chiosarlo.

Quest’opera li tolse quei confini”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto dodicesimo

Canto XII, ove si tratta del secondo girone dove sono intagliate certe imagini antiche de' superbi; e quivi si puniscono li superbi medesimi.

Di pari, come buoi che vanno a giogo,
m'andava io con quell'anima carca,
fin che 'l sofferse il dolce pedagogo.

Ma quando disse: "Lascia lui e varca;
ché qui è buono con l'ali e coi remi,
quantunque può, ciascun pinger sua barca";

dritto sì come andar vuolsi rife' mi
con la persona, avvegna che i pensieri
mi rimanessero e chinati e scemi.

Io m'era mosso, e seguia volontieri
del mio maestro i passi, e amendue
già mostravam com'eravam leggeri;

ed el mi disse: "Volgi li occhi in giùe:
buon ti sarà, per tranquillar la via,
veder lo letto de le piante tue".

Come, perché di lor memoria sia,
sovra i sepolti le tombe terragne
portan segnato quel ch'elli eran pria,

onde lì molte volte si ripiagne
per la puntura de la rimembranza,
che solo a' pïi dà de le calcagne;

sì vid'io lì, ma di miglior sembianza
secondo l'artificio, figurato
quanto per via di fuor del monte avanza.

Vedea colui che fu nobil creato
più ch'altra creatura, giù dal cielo

folgoreggiando scender, da l’un lato.

Vedëa Brïareo fitto dal telo
celestïal giacer, da l’altra parte,
grave a la terra per lo mortal gelo.

Vedea Timbreo, vedea Pallade e Marte,
armati ancora, intorno al padre loro,
mirar le membra d’i Giganti sparte.

Vedea Nembròt a piè del gran lavoro
quasi smarrito, e riguardar le genti
che ‘n Sennaàr con lui superbi fuoro.

O Nïobè, con che occhi dolenti
vedea io te segnata in su la strada,
tra sette e sette tuoi figliuoli spenti!

O Saùl, come in su la propria spada
quivi parevi morto in Gelboè,
che poi non sentì pioggia né rugiada!

O folle Aragne, sì vedea io te
già mezza ragna, trista in su li stracci
de l’opera che mal per te si fé.

O Roboàm, già non par che minacci
quivi ‘l tuo segno; ma pien di spavento
nel porta un carro, sanza ch’altri il cacci.

Mostrava ancor lo duro pavimento
come Almeon a sua madre fé caro
parer lo sventurato addornamento.

Mostrava come i figli si gittaro
sovra Sennacherìb dentro dal tempio,
e come, morto lui, quivi il lasciaro.

Mostrava la ruina e ‘l crudo scempio
che fé Tamiri, quando disse a Ciro:

“Sangue sitisti, e io di sangue t’empio”. 57

Mostrava come in rotta si fuggiro
li Assiri, poi che fu morto Oloferne,
e anche le reliquie del martiro. 60

Vedeva Troia in cenere e in caverne;
o Ilïón, come te basso e vile
mostrava il segno che lì si discerne! 63

Qual di pennel fu maestro o di stile
che ritraesse l’ombre e ‘ tratti ch’ivi
mirar farieno uno ingegno sottile? 66

Morti li morti e i vivi parean vivi:
non vide mei di me chi vide il vero,
quant’io calcai, fin che chinato givi. 69

Or superbite, e via col viso altero,
figliuoli d’Eva, e non chinate il volto
sì che veggiate il vostro mal sentero! 72

Più era già per noi del monte vòlto
e del cammin del sole assai più speso
che non stimava l’animo non sciolto, 75

quando colui che sempre innanzi atteso
andava, cominciò: “Drizza la testa;
non è più tempo di gir sì sospeso. 78

Vedi colà un angel che s’appresta
per venir verso noi; vedi che torna
dal servigio del dì l’ancella sesta. 81

Di reverenza il viso e li atti addorna,
sì che i diletti lo ‘nvïarci in suso;
pensa che questo dì mai non raggiorna!”. 84

Io era ben del suo ammonir uso
pur di non perder tempo, sì che ‘n quella

materia non potea parlarmi chiuso.

A noi venìa la creatura bella,
biancovestito e ne la faccia quale
par tremolando mattutina stella.

Le braccia aperse, e indi aperse l’ale;
disse: “Venite: qui son presso i gradi,
e agevolemente omai si sale.

A questo invito vegnon molto radi:
o gente umana, per volar sù nata,
perché a poco vento così cadi?”.

Menocci ove la roccia era tagliata;
quivi mi batté l’ali per la fronte;
poi mi promise sicura l’andata.

Come a man destra, per salire al monte
dove siede la chiesa che soggioga
la ben guidata sopra Rubaconte,

si rompe del montar l’ardita foga
per le scalee che si fero ad etade
ch’era sicuro il quaderno e la doga;

così s’allenta la ripa che cade
quivi ben ratta da l’altro girone;
ma quinci e quindi l’alta pietra rade.

Noi volgendo ivi le nostre persone,
‘Beati pauperes spiritu!’ voci
cantaron sì, che nol diria sermone.

Ahi quanto son diverse quelle foci
da l’infernali! ché quivi per canti
s’entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci.

Già montavam su per li scaglion santi,
ed esser mi parea troppo più lieve

che per lo pian non mi parea davanti.

Ond’io: “Maestro, dì, qual cosa greve
levata s’è da me, che nulla quasi
per me fatica, andando, si riceve?”.

Rispuose: “Quando i P che son rimasi
ancor nel volto tuo presso che stinti,
saranno, com’è l’un, del tutto rasi,

fier li tuoi piè dal buon voler sì vinti,
che non pur non fatica sentiranno,
ma fia diletto loro esser sù pinti”.

Allor fec’io come color che vanno
con cosa in capo non da lor saputa,
se non che ‘ cenni altrui sospecciar fanno;

per che la mano ad accertar s’aiuta,
e cerca e truova e quello officio adempie
che non si può fornir per la veduta;

e con le dita de la destra scempie
trovai pur sei le lettere che ‘ncise
quel da le chiavi a me sovra le tempie:

a che guardando, il mio duca sorrise.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto tredicesimo

Canto XIII, dove si tratta del sopradetto girone secondo, e quivi si punisce la colpa della invidia; dove nomina madonna Sapìa, moglie di messer Viviano de' Ghinibaldi da Siena, e molti altri.

Noi eravamo al sommo de la scala,
dove secondamente si risega
lo monte che salendo altrui dismala.

Ivi così una cornice lega
dintorno il poggio, come la primaia;
se non che l'arco suo più tosto piega.

Ombra non lì è né segno che si paia:
parsi la ripa e parsi la via schietta
col livido color de la petraia.

"Se qui per dimandar gente s'aspetta",
ragionava il poeta, "io temo forse
che troppo avrà d'indugio nostra eletta".

Poi fisamente al sole li occhi porse;
fece del destro lato a muover centro,
e la sinistra parte di sé torse.

"O dolce lume a cui fidanza i' entro
per lo novo cammin, tu ne conduci",
dicea, "come condur si vuol quinc'entro.

Tu scaldi il mondo, tu sovr'esso luci;
s'altra ragione in contrario non ponta,
esser dien sempre li tuoi raggi duci".

Quanto di qua per un migliaio si conta,
tanto di là eravam noi già iti,
con poco tempo, per la voglia pronta;

e verso noi volar furon sentiti,
non però visti, spiriti parlando
a la mensa d’amor cortesi inviti.

La prima voce che passò volando
‘Vinum non habent’altamente disse,
e dietro a noi l’andò reïterando.

E prima che del tutto non si udisse
per allungarsi, un’altra ‘I’ sono Oreste’
passò gridando, e anco non s’affisse.

“Oh!”, diss’io, “padre, che voci son queste?”.
E com’io domandai, ecco la terza
dicendo: ‘Amate da cui male aveste’.

E ‘l buon maestro: “Questo cinghio sferza
la colpa de la invidia, e però sono
tratte d’amor le corde de la ferza.

Lo fren vuol esser del contrario suono;
credo che l’udirai, per mio avviso,
prima che giunghi al passo del perdono.

Ma ficca li occhi per l’aere ben fiso,
e vedrai gente innanzi a noi sedersi,
e ciascun è lungo la grotta assiso”.

Allora più che prima li occhi apersi;
guarda’ mi innanzi, e vidi ombre con manti
al color de la pietra non diversi.

E poi che fummo un poco più avanti,
udia gridar: ‘Maria òra per noi’:
gridar ‘Michele’ e ‘Pietro’ e ‘Tutti santi’.

Non credo che per terra vada ancoi
omo sì duro, che non fosse punto
per compassion di quel ch’i’ vidi poi;

ché, quando fui sì presso di lor giunto,
che li atti loro a me venivan certi,
per li occhi fui di grave dolor munto.

Di vil ciliccio mi parean coperti,
e l'un sofferia l'altro con la spalla,
e tutti da la ripa eran sofferti.

Così li ciechi a cui la roba falla,
stanno a' perdoni a chieder lor bisogna,
e l'uno il capo sopra l'altro avvalla,

perché 'n altrui pietà tosto si pogna,
non pur per lo sonar de le parole,
ma per la vista che non meno agogna.

E come a li orbi non approda il sole,
così a l'ombre quivi, ond'io parlo ora,
luce del ciel di sé largir non vole;

ché a tutti un fil di ferro i cigli fóra
e cusce sì, come a sparvier selvaggio
si fa però che queto non dimora.

A me pareva, andando, fare oltraggio,
veggendo altrui, non essendo veduto:
per ch'io mi volsi al mio consiglio saggio.

Ben sapev'ei che volea dir lo muto;
e però non attese mia dimanda,
ma disse: "Parla, e sie breve e arguto".

Virgilio mi venìa da quella banda
de la cornice onde cader si puote,
perché da nulla sponda s'inghirlanda;

da l'altra parte m'eran le divote
ombre, che per l'orribile costura
premevan sì, che bagnavan le gote.

Volsimi a loro e: “O gente sicura”,
incominciai, “di veder l’alto lume
che ‘l disio vostro solo ha in sua cura,

se tosto grazia resolva le schiume
di vostra coscïenza sì che chiaro
per essa scenda de la mente il fiume,

ditemi, ché mi fia grazioso e caro,
s’anima è qui tra voi che sia latina;
e forse lei sarà buon s’i’ l’apparo”.

“O frate mio, ciascuna è cittadina
d’una vera città; ma tu vuo’ dire
che vivesse in Italia peregrina”.

Questo mi parve per risposta udire
più innanzi alquanto che là dov’io stava,
ond’io mi feci ancor più là sentire.

Tra l’altre vidi un’ombra ch’aspettava
in vista; e se volesse alcun dir ‘Come?’,
lo mento a guisa d’orbo in sù levava.

“Spirto”, diss’io, “che per salir ti dome,
se tu se’ quelli che mi rispondesti,
fammiti conto o per luogo o per nome”.

“Io fui sanese”, rispuose, “e con questi
altri rimendo qui la vita ria,
lagrimando a colui che sé ne presti.

Savia non fui, avvegna che Sapìa
fossi chiamata, e fui de li altrui danni
più lieta assai che di ventura mia.

E perché tu non creda ch’io t’inganni,
odi s’i’ fui, com’io ti dico, folle,
già discendendo l’arco d’i miei anni.

Eran li cittadin miei presso a Colle
in campo giunti co' loro avversari,
e io pregava Iddio di quel ch'e' volle.

Rotti fuor quivi e vòlti ne li amari
passi di fuga; e veggendo la caccia,
letizia presi a tutte altre dispari,

tanto ch'io volsi in sù l'ardita faccia,
gridando a Dio: "Omai più non ti temo!",
come fé 'l merlo per poca bonaccia.

Pace volli con Dio in su lo stremo
de la mia vita; e ancor non sarebbe
lo mio dover per penitenza scemo,

se ciò non fosse, ch'a memoria m'ebbe
Pier Pettinaio in sue sante orazioni,
a cui di me per caritate increbbe.

Ma tu chi se', che nostre condizioni
vai dimandando, e porti li occhi sciolti,
sì com'io credo, e spirando ragioni?".

"Li occhi", diss'io, "mi fieno ancor qui tolti,
ma picciol tempo, ché poca è l'offesa
fatta per esser con invidia vòlti.

Troppa è più la paura ond'è sospesa
l'anima mia del tormento di sotto,
che già lo 'ncarco di là giù mi pesa".

Ed ella a me: "Chi t' ha dunque condotto
qua sù tra noi, se giù ritornar credi?".
E io: "Costui ch'è meco e non fa motto.

E vivo sono; e però mi richiedi,
spirito eletto, se tu vuo' ch'i' mova
di là per te ancor li mortai piedi".

“Oh, questa è a udir sì cosa nuova”,
rispuose, “che gran segno è che Dio t’ami;
però col priego tuo talor mi giova.

E cheggioti, per quel che tu più brami,
se mai calchi la terra di Toscana,
che a’ miei propinqui tu ben mi rinfami.

Tu li vedrai tra quella gente vana
che spera in Talamone, e perderagli
più di speranza ch’a trovar la Diana;

ma più vi perderanno li ammiragli”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quattordicesimo

Canto XIV, dove si tratta del sopradetto girone, e qui si purga la sopradetta colpa della invidia; dove nomina messer Rinieri da Calvoli e molti altri.

“Chi è costui che ‘l nostro monte cerchia
prima che morte li abbia dato il volo,
e apre li occhi a sua voglia e coverchia?”.

“Non so chi sia, ma so ch’e’ non è solo;
domandal tu che più li t’avvicini,
e dolcemente, sì che parli, acco’ lo”.

Così due spirti, l’uno a l’altro chini,
ragionavan di me ivi a man dritta;
poi fer li visi, per dirmi, supini;

e disse l’uno: “O anima che fitta
nel corpo ancora inver’ lo ciel ten vai,
per carità ne consola e ne ditta

onde vieni e chi se’; ché tu ne fai
tanto maravigliar de la tua grazia,
quanto vuol cosa che non fu più mai”.

E io: “Per mezza Toscana si spazia
un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona,
e cento miglia di corso nol sazia.

Di sovr’esso rech’io questa persona:
dirvi ch’i’ sia, saria parlare indarno,
ché ‘l nome mio ancor molto non suona”.

“Se ben lo ‘ntendimento tuo accarno
con lo ‘ntelletto”, allora mi rispuose
quei che diceva pria, “tu parli d’Arno”.

E l’altro disse lui: “Perché nascose
questi il vocabol di quella riviera,

pur com’om fa de l’orribili cose?”. 27

E l’ombra che di ciò domandata era,
si sdebitò così: “Non so; ma degno
ben è che ‘l nome di tal valle pèra; 30

ché dal principio suo, ov’è sì pregno
l’alpestro monte ond’è tronco Peloro,
che ‘n pochi luoghi passa oltra quel segno, 33

infin là ‘ve si rende per ristoro
di quel che ‘l ciel de la marina asciuga,
ond’ hanno i fiumi ciò che va con loro, 36

vertù così per nimica si fuga
da tutti come biscia, o per sventura
del luogo, o per mal uso che li fruga: 39

ond’ hanno sì mutata lor natura
li abitator de la misera valle,
che par che Circe li avesse in pastura. 42

Tra brutti porci, più degni di galle
che d’altro cibo fatto in uman uso,
dirizza prima il suo povero calle. 45

Botoli trova poi, venendo giuso,
ringhiosi più che non chiede lor possa,
e da lor disdegnosa torce il muso. 48

Vassi caggendo; e quant’ella più ‘ngrossa,
tanto più trova di can farsi lupi
la maladetta e sventurata fossa. 51

Discesa poi per più pelaghi cupi,
trova le volpi sì piene di froda,
che non temono ingegno che le occùpi. 54

Né lascerò di dir perch’altri m’oda;
e buon sarà costui, s’ancor s’ammenta

di ciò che vero spirto mi disnoda.

Io veggio tuo nepote che diventa
cacciator di quei lupi in su la riva
del fiero fiume, e tutti li sgomenta.

Vende la carne loro essendo viva;
poscia li ancide come antica belva;
molti di vita e sé di pregio priva.

Sanguinoso esce de la trista selva;
lasciala tal, che di qui a mille anni
ne lo stato primaio non si rinselva".

Com'a l'annunzio di dogliosi danni
si turba il viso di colui ch'ascolta,
da qual che parte il periglio l'assanni,

così vid'io l'altr'anima, che volta
stava a udir, turbarsi e farsi trista,
poi ch'ebbe la parola a sé raccolta.

Lo dir de l'una e de l'altra la vista
mi fer voglioso di saper lor nomi,
e dimanda ne fei con prieghi mista;

per che lo spirto che di pria parlòmi
ricominciò: "Tu vuo' ch'io mi deduca
nel fare a te ciò che tu far non vuo' mi.

Ma da che Dio in te vuol che traluca
tanto sua grazia, non ti sarò scarso;
però sappi ch'io fui Guido del Duca.

Fu il sangue mio d'invidia sì rïarso,
che se veduto avesse uom farsi lieto,
visto m'avresti di livore sparso.

Di mia semente cotal paglia mieto;
o gente umana, perché poni 'l core

là ‘v’è mestier di consorte divieto? 87

Questi è Rinier; questi è ‘l pregio e l’onore
de la casa da Calboli, ove nullo
fatto s’è reda poi del suo valore. 90

E non pur lo suo sangue è fatto brullo,
tra ‘l Po e ‘l monte e la marina e ‘l Reno,
del ben richesto al vero e al trastullo; 93

ché dentro a questi termini è ripieno
di venenosi sterpi, sì che tardi
per coltivare omai verrebber meno. 96

Ov’è ‘l buon Lizio e Arrigo Mainardi?
Pier Traversaro e Guido di Carpigna?
Oh Romagnuoli tornati in bastardi! 99

Quando in Bologna un Fabbro si ralligna?
quando in Faenza un Bernardin di Fosco,
verga gentil di picciola gramigna? 102

Non ti maravigliar s’io piango, Tosco,
quando rimembro, con Guido da Prata,
Ugolin d’Azzo che vivette nosco, 105

Federigo Tignoso e sua brigata,
la casa Traversara e li Anastagi
(e l’una gente e l’altra è diretata), 108

le donne e ‘ cavalier, li affanni e li agi
che ne ‘nvogliava amore e cortesia
là dove i cuor son fatti sì malvagi. 111

O Bretinoro, ché non fuggi via,
poi che gita se n’è la tua famiglia
e molta gente per non esser ria? 114

Ben fa Bagnacaval, che non rifiglia;
e mal fa Castrocaro, e peggio Conio,

che di figliar tai conti più s’impiglia.

Ben faranno i Pagan, da che ‘l demonio
lor sen girà; ma non però che puro
già mai rimagna d’essi testimonio.

O Ugolin de’ Fantolin, sicuro
è ‘l nome tuo, da che più non s’aspetta
chi far lo possa, tralignando, scuro.

Ma va via, Tosco, omai; ch’or mi diletta
troppo di pianger più che di parlare,
sì m’ ha nostra ragion la mente stretta”.

Noi sapavam che quell’anime care
ci sentivano andar; però, tacendo,
facëan noi del cammin confidare.

Poi fummo fatti soli procedendo,
folgore parve quando l’aere fende,
voce che giunse di contra dicendo:

‘Anciderammi qualunque m’apprende’;
e fuggì come tuon che si dilegua,
se sùbito la nuvola scoscende.

Come da lei l’udir nostro ebbe triegua,
ed ecco l’altra con sì gran fracasso,
che somigliò tonar che tosto segua:

“Io sono Aglauro che divenni sasso”;
e allor, per ristrignermi al poeta,
in destro feci, e non innanzi, il passo.

Già era l’aura d’ogne parte queta;
ed el mi disse: “Quel fu ‘l duro camo
che dovria l’uom tener dentro a sua meta.

Ma voi prendete l’esca, sì che l’amo
de l’antico avversaro a sé vi tira;

e però poco val freno o richiamo.

Chiamavi ‘l cielo e ‘ntorno vi si gira,
mostrandovi le sue bellezze etterne,
e l’occhio vostro pur a terra mira;

onde vi batte chi tutto discerne”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quindicesimo

Canto XV, il quale tratta de la essenza del terzo girone, luogo diputato a purgare la colpa e peccato de l'ira; e dichiara Virgilio a Dante uno dubbio nato di parole dette nel precedente canto da Guido del Duca, e una visione ch'aparve in sogno a l'auttore, cioè Dante.

Quanto tra l'ultimar de l'ora terza
e 'l principio del dì par de la spera
che sempre a guisa di fanciullo scherza,

tanto pareva già inver' la sera
essere al sol del suo corso rimaso;
vespero là, e qui mezza notte era.

E i raggi ne ferien per mezzo 'l naso,
perché per noi girato era sì 'l monte,
che già dritti andavamo inver' l'occaso,

quand'io senti' a me gravar la fronte
a lo splendore assai più che di prima,
e stupor m'eran le cose non conte;

ond'io levai le mani inver' la cima
de le mie ciglia, e fecimi 'l solecchio,
che del soverchio visibile lima.

Come quando da l'acqua o da lo specchio
salta lo raggio a l'opposita parte,
salendo sù per lo modo parecchio

a quel che scende, e tanto si diparte
dal cader de la pietra in igual tratta,
sì come mostra esperïenza e arte;

così mi parve da luce rifratta
quivi dinanzi a me esser percosso;
per che a fuggir la mia vista fu ratta.

“Che è quel, dolce padre, a che non posso
schermar lo viso tanto che mi vaglia”,
diss’io, “e pare inver’ noi esser mosso?”. 27

“Non ti maravigliar s’ancor t’abbaglia
la famiglia del cielo”, a me rispuose:
“messo è che viene ad invitar ch’om saglia. 30

Tosto sarà ch’a veder queste cose
non ti fia grave, ma fieti diletto
quanto natura a sentir ti dispuose”. 33

Poi giunti fummo a l’angel benedetto,
con lieta voce disse: “Intrate quinci
ad un scaleo vie men che li altri eretto”. 36

Noi montavam, già partiti di linci,
e ‘Beati misericordes!’ fue
cantato retro, e ‘Godi tu che vinci!’. 39

Lo mio maestro e io soli amendue
suso andavamo; e io pensai, andando,
prode acquistar ne le parole sue; 42

e dirizza’ mi a lui sì dimandando:
“Che volse dir lo spirto di Romagna,
e ‘divieto’ e ‘consorte’ menzionando?”. 45

Per ch’elli a me: “Di sua maggior magagna
conosce il danno; e però non s’ammiri
se ne riprende perché men si piagna. 48

Perché s’appuntano i vostri disiri
dove per compagnia parte si scema,
invidia move il mantaco a’ sospiri. 51

Ma se l’amor de la spera supprema
torcesse in suso il disiderio vostro,
non vi sarebbe al petto quella tema; 54

ché, per quanti si dice più lì ‘nostro’,
tanto possiede più di ben ciascuno,
e più di caritate arde in quel chiostro”.

“Io son d’esser contento più digiuno”,
diss’io, “che se mi fosse pria taciuto,
e più di dubbio ne la mente aduno.

Com’esser puote ch’un ben, distributo
in più posseditor, faccia più ricchi
di sé che se da pochi è posseduto?”.

Ed elli a me: “Però che tu rificchi
la mente pur a le cose terrene,
di vera luce tenebre dispicchi.

Quello infinito e ineffabil bene
che là sù è, così corre ad amore
com’a lucido corpo raggio vene.

Tanto si dà quanto trova d’ardore;
sì che, quantunque carità si stende,
cresce sovr’essa l’etterno valore.

E quanta gente più là sù s’intende,
più v’è da bene amare, e più vi s’ama,
e come specchio l’uno a l’altro rende.

E se la mia ragion non ti disfama,
vedrai Beatrice, ed ella pienamente
ti torrà questa e ciascun’altra brama.

Procaccia pur che tosto sieno spente,
come son già le due, le cinque piaghe,
che si richiudon per esser dolente”.

Com’io voleva dicer ‘Tu m’appaghe’,
vidimi giunto in su l’altro girone,
sì che tacer mi fer le luci vaghe.

Ivi mi parve in una visïone
estatica di sùbito esser tratto,
e vedere in un tempio più persone;

e una donna, in su l’entrar, con atto
dolce di madre dicer: “Figliuol mio,
perché hai tu così verso noi fatto?

Ecco, dolenti, lo tuo padre e io
ti cercavamo”. E come qui si tacque,
ciò che pareva prima, dispario.

Indi m’apparve un’altra con quell’acque
giù per le gote che ‘l dolor distilla
quando di gran dispetto in altrui nacque,

e dir: “Se tu se’ sire de la villa
del cui nome ne’ dèi fu tanta lite,
e onde ogne scïenza disfavilla,

vendica te di quelle braccia ardite
ch’abbracciar nostra figlia, o Pisistràto”.
E ‘l segnor mi parea, benigno e mite,

risponder lei con viso temperato:
“Che farem noi a chi mal ne disira,
se quei che ci ama è per noi condannato?”.

Poi vidi genti accese in foco d’ira
con pietre un giovinetto ancider, forte
gridando a sé pur: “Martira, martira!”.

E lui vedea chinarsi, per la morte
che l’aggravava già, inver’ la terra,
ma de li occhi facea sempre al ciel porte,

orando a l’alto Sire, in tanta guerra,
che perdonasse a’ suoi persecutori,
con quello aspetto che pietà diserra.

Quando l’anima mia tornò di fori
a le cose che son fuor di lei vere,
io riconobbi i miei non falsi errori.

Lo duca mio, che mi potea vedere
far sì com’om che dal sonno si slega,
disse: “Che hai che non ti puoi tenere,

ma se’ venuto più che mezza lega
velando li occhi e con le gambe avvolte,
a guisa di cui vino o sonno piega?”.

“O dolce padre mio, se tu m’ascolte,
io ti dirò”, diss’io, “ciò che m’apparve
quando le gambe mi furon sì tolte”.

Ed ei: “Se tu avessi cento larve
sovra la faccia, non mi sarian chiuse
le tue cogitazion, quantunque parve.

Ciò che vedesti fu perché non scuse
d’aprir lo core a l’acque de la pace
che da l’etterno fonte son diffuse.

Non dimandai “Che hai?” per quel che face
chi guarda pur con l’occhio che non vede,
quando disanimato il corpo giace;

ma dimandai per darti forza al piede:
così frugar conviensi i pigri, lenti
ad usar lor vigilia quando riede”.

Noi andavam per lo vespero, attenti
oltre quanto potean li occhi allungarsi
contra i raggi serotini e lucenti.

Ed ecco a poco a poco un fummo farsi
verso di noi come la notte oscuro;
né da quello era loco da cansarsi.

Questo ne tolse li occhi e l’aere puro.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto sedicesimo

Canto XVI, dove si tratta del sopradetto terzo girone e del purgare la detta colpa de l'ira; e qui Marco Lombardo solve uno dubbio a Dante.

Buio d'inferno e di notte privata
d'ogne pianeto, sotto pover cielo,
quant'esser può di nuvol tenebrata,

non fece al viso mio sì grosso velo
come quel fummo ch'ivi ci coperse,
né a sentir di così aspro pelo,

che l'occhio stare aperto non sofferse;
onde la scorta mia saputa e fida
mi s'accostò e l'omero m'offerse.

Sì come cieco va dietro a sua guida
per non smarrirsi e per non dar di cozzo
in cosa che 'l molesti, o forse ancida,

m'andava io per l'aere amaro e sozzo,
ascoltando il mio duca che diceva
pur: "Guarda che da me tu non sia mozzo".

Io sentia voci, e ciascuna pareva
pregar per pace e per misericordia
l'Agnel di Dio che le peccata leva.

Pur 'Agnus Dei' eran le loro essordia;
una parola in tutte era e un modo,
sì che parea tra esse ogne concordia.

"Quei sono spirti, maestro, ch'i' odo?",
diss'io. Ed elli a me: "Tu vero apprendi,
e d'iracundia van solvendo il nodo".

"Or tu chi se' che 'l nostro fummo fendi,
e di noi parli pur come se tue

partissi ancor lo tempo per calendi?”.

Così per una voce detto fue;
onde ‘l maestro mio disse: “Rispondi,
e domanda se quinci si va sùe”.

E io: “O creatura che ti mondi
per tornar bella a colui che ti fece,
maraviglia udirai, se mi secondi”.

“Io ti seguiterò quanto mi lece”,
rispuose; “e se veder fummo non lascia,
l’udir ci terrà giunti in quella vece”.

Allora incominciai: “Con quella fascia
che la morte dissolve men vo suso,
e venni qui per l’infernale ambascia.

E se Dio m’ ha in sua grazia rinchiuso,
tanto che vuol ch’i’ veggia la sua corte
per modo tutto fuor del moderno uso,

non mi celar chi fosti anzi la morte,
ma dilmi, e dimmi s’i’ vo bene al varco;
e tue parole fier le nostre scorte”.

“Lombardo fui, e fu’ chiamato Marco;
del mondo seppi, e quel valore amai
al quale ha or ciascun disteso l’arco.

Per montar sù dirittamente vai”.
Così rispuose, e soggiunse: “I’ ti prego
che per me prieghi quando sù sarai”.

E io a lui: “Per fede mi ti lego
di far ciò che mi chiedi; ma io scoppio
dentro ad un dubbio, s’io non me ne spiego.

Prima era scempio, e ora è fatto doppio
ne la sentenza tua, che mi fa certo

qui, e altrove, quello ov’io l’accoppio.

Lo mondo è ben così tutto diserto
d’ogne virtute, come tu mi sone,
e di malizia gravido e coverto;

ma priego che m’addite la cagione,
sì ch’i’ la veggia e ch’i’ la mostri altrui;
ché nel cielo uno, e un qua giù la pone”.

Alto sospir, che duolo strinse in “uhi!”,
mise fuor prima; e poi cominciò: “Frate,
lo mondo è cieco, e tu vien ben da lui.

Voi che vivete ogne cagion recate
pur suso al cielo, pur come se tutto
movesse seco di necessitate.

Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto
libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia
per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto.

Lo cielo i vostri movimenti inizia;
non dico tutti, ma, posto ch’i’ ‘l dica,
lume v’è dato a bene e a malizia,

e libero voler; che, se fatica
ne le prime battaglie col ciel dura,
poi vince tutto, se ben si notrica.

A maggior forza e a miglior natura
liberi soggiacete; e quella cria
la mente in voi, che ‘l ciel non ha in sua cura.

Però, se ‘l mondo presente disvia,
in voi è la cagione, in voi si cheggia;
e io te ne sarò or vera spia.

Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia
prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla

che piangendo e ridendo pargoleggia, 87

l’anima semplicetta che sa nulla,
salvo che, mossa da lieto fattore,
volontier torna a ciò che la trastulla. 90

Di picciol bene in pria sente sapore;
quivi s’inganna, e dietro ad esso corre,
se guida o fren non torce suo amore. 93

Onde convenne legge per fren porre;
convenne rege aver, che discernesse
de la vera cittade almen la torre. 96

Le leggi son, ma chi pon mano ad esse?
Nullo, però che ‘l pastor che procede,
rugumar può, ma non ha l’unghie fesse; 99

per che la gente, che sua guida vede
pur a quel ben fedire ond’ella è ghiotta,
di quel si pasce, e più oltre non chiede. 102

Ben puoi veder che la mala condotta
è la cagion che ‘l mondo ha fatto reo,
e non natura che ‘n voi sia corrotta. 105

Soleva Roma, che ‘l buon mondo feo,
due soli aver, che l’una e l’altra strada
facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo. 108

L’un l’altro ha spento; ed è giunta la spada
col pasturale, e l’un con l’altro insieme
per viva forza mal convien che vada; 111

però che, giunti, l’un l’altro non teme:
se non mi credi, pon mente a la spiga,
ch’ogn’erba si conosce per lo seme. 114

In sul paese ch’Adice e Po riga,
solea valore e cortesia trovarsi,

prima che Federigo avesse briga;

or può sicuramente indi passarsi
per qualunque lasciasse, per vergogna,
di ragionar coi buoni o d’appressarsi.

Ben v’èn tre vecchi ancora in cui rampogna
l’antica età la nova, e par lor tardo
che Dio a miglior vita li ripogna:

Currado da Palazzo e ‘l buon Gherardo
e Guido da Castel, che mei si noma,
francescamente, il semplice Lombardo.

Dì oggimai che la Chiesa di Roma,
per confondere in sé due reggimenti,
cade nel fango, e sé brutta e la soma”.

“O Marco mio”, diss’io, “bene argomenti;
e or discerno perché dal retaggio
li figli di Levì furono essenti.

Ma qual Gherardo è quel che tu per saggio
di’ ch’è rimaso de la gente spenta,
in rimprovèro del secol selvaggio?”.

“O tuo parlar m’inganna, o el mi tenta”,
rispuose a me; “ché, parlandomi tosco,
par che del buon Gherardo nulla senta.

Per altro sopranome io nol conosco,
s’io nol togliessi da sua figlia Gaia.
Dio sia con voi, ché più non vegno vosco.

Vedi l’albor che per lo fummo raia
già biancheggiare, e me convien partirmi
(l’angelo è ivi) prima ch’io li paia”.

Così tornò, e più non volle udirmi.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciassettesimo

Canto XVII, dove tratta de la qualità del quarto girone, dove si purga la colpa de la accidia, dove si ristora l'amore de lo imperfetto bene; e qui dichiara una questione che indi nasce.

Ricorditi, lettor, se mai ne l'alpe
ti colse nebbia per la qual vedessi
non altrimenti che per pelle talpe,

come, quando i vapori umidi e spessi
a diradar cominciansi, la spera
del sol debilemente entra per essi;

e fia la tua imagine leggera
in giugnere a veder com'io rividi
lo sole in pria, che già nel corcar era.

Sì, pareggiando i miei co' passi fidi
del mio maestro, usci' fuor di tal nube
ai raggi morti già ne' bassi lidi.

O imaginativa che ne rube
talvolta sì di fuor, ch'om non s'accorge
perché dintorno suonin mille tube,

chi move te, se 'l senso non ti porge?
Moveti lume che nel ciel s'informa,
per sé o per voler che giù lo scorge.

De l'empiezza di lei che mutò forma
ne l'uccel ch'a cantar più si diletta,
ne l'imagine mia apparve l'orma;

e qui fu la mia mente sì ristretta
dentro da sé, che di fuor non venìa
cosa che fosse allor da lei ricetta.

Poi piovve dentro a l’alta fantasia
un crucifisso, dispettoso e fero
ne la sua vista, e cotal si moria;

intorno ad esso era il grande Assüero,
Estèr sua sposa e ‘l giusto Mardoceo,
che fu al dire e al far così intero.

E come questa imagine rompeo
sé per sé stessa, a guisa d’una bulla
cui manca l’acqua sotto qual si feo,

surse in mia visïone una fanciulla
piangendo forte, e dicea: “O regina,
perché per ira hai voluto esser nulla?

Ancisa t’ hai per non perder Lavina;
or m’ hai perduta! Io son essa che lutto,
madre, a la tua pria ch’a l’altrui ruina”.

Come si frange il sonno ove di butto
nova luce percuote il viso chiuso,
che fratto guizza pria che muoia tutto;

così l’imaginar mio cadde giuso
tosto che lume il volto mi percosse,
maggior assai che quel ch’è in nostro uso.

I’ mi volgea per veder ov’io fosse,
quando una voce disse “Qui si monta”,
che da ogne altro intento mi rimosse;

e fece la mia voglia tanto pronta
di riguardar chi era che parlava,
che mai non posa, se non si raffronta.

Ma come al sol che nostra vista grava
e per soverchio sua figura vela,
così la mia virtù quivi mancava.

“Questo è divino spirito, che ne la
via da ir sù ne drizza sanza prego,
e col suo lume sé medesmo cela.

Sì fa con noi, come l’uom si fa sego;
ché quale aspetta prego e l’uopo vede,
malignamente già si mette al nego.

Or accordiamo a tanto invito il piede;
procacciam di salir pria che s’abbui,
ché poi non si poria, se ‘l dì non riede”.

Così disse il mio duca, e io con lui
volgemmo i nostri passi ad una scala;
e tosto ch’io al primo grado fui,

senti’ mi presso quasi un muover d’ala
e ventarmi nel viso e dir: ‘Beati
pacifici, che son sanz’ira mala!’.

Già eran sovra noi tanto levati
li ultimi raggi che la notte segue,
che le stelle apparivan da più lati.

‘O virtù mia, perché sì ti dilegue?’,
fra me stesso dicea, ché mi sentiva
la possa de le gambe posta in triegue.

Noi eravam dove più non saliva
la scala sù, ed eravamo affissi,
pur come nave ch’a la piaggia arriva.

E io attesi un poco, s’io udissi
alcuna cosa nel novo girone;
poi mi volsi al maestro mio, e dissi:

“Dolce mio padre, dì, quale offensione
si purga qui nel giro dove semo?
Se i piè si stanno, non stea tuo sermone”.

Ed elli a me: “L’amor del bene, scemo
del suo dover, quiritta si ristora;
qui si ribatte il mal tardato remo.

Ma perché più aperto intendi ancora,
volgi la mente a me, e prenderai
alcun buon frutto di nostra dimora”.

“Né creator né creatura mai”,
cominciò el, “figliuol, fu sanza amore,
o naturale o d’animo; e tu ‘l sai.

Lo naturale è sempre sanza errore,
ma l’altro puote errar per malo obietto
o per troppo o per poco di vigore.

Mentre ch’elli è nel primo ben diretto,
e ne’ secondi sé stesso misura,
esser non può cagion di mal diletto;

ma quando al mal si torce, o con più cura
o con men che non dee corre nel bene,
contra ‘l fattore adovra sua fattura.

Quinci comprender puoi ch’esser convene
amor sementa in voi d’ogne virtute
e d’ogne operazion che merta pene.

Or, perché mai non può da la salute
amor del suo subietto volger viso,
da l’odio proprio son le cose tute;

e perché intender non si può diviso,
e per sé stante, alcuno esser dal primo,
da quello odiare ogne effetto è deciso.

Resta, se dividendo bene stimo,
che ‘l mal che s’ama è del prossimo; ed esso
amor nasce in tre modi in vostro limo.

E’ chi, per esser suo vicin soppresso,
spera eccellenza, e sol per questo brama
ch’el sia di sua grandezza in basso messo;

è chi podere, grazia, onore e fama
teme di perder perch’altri sormonti,
onde s’attrista sì che ‘l contrario ama;

ed è chi per ingiuria par ch’aonti,
sì che si fa de la vendetta ghiotto,
e tal convien che ‘l male altrui impronti.

Questo triforme amor qua giù di sotto
si piange: or vo’ che tu de l’altro intende,
che corre al ben con ordine corrotto.

Ciascun confusamente un bene apprende
nel qual si queti l’animo, e disira;
per che di giugner lui ciascun contende.

Se lento amore a lui veder vi tira
o a lui acquistar, questa cornice,
dopo giusto penter, ve ne martira.

Altro ben è che non fa l’uom felice;
non è felicità, non è la buona
essenza, d’ogne ben frutto e radice.

L’amor ch’ad esso troppo s’abbandona,
di sovr’a noi si piange per tre cerchi;
ma come tripartito si ragiona,

tacciolo, acciò che tu per te ne cerchi”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciottesimo

Canto XVIII, il quale tratta del sopradetto quarto girone, ove si purga la soprascritta colpa e peccato de l'accidia; e qui mostra Virgilio che è perfetto amore; dove nomina l'abate da San Zeno di Verona.

Posto avea fine al suo ragionamento
l'alto dottore, e attento guardava
ne la mia vista s'io parea contento;

e io, cui nova sete ancor frugava,
di fuor tacea, e dentro dicea: 'Forse
lo troppo dimandar ch'io fo li grava'.

Ma quel padre verace, che s'accorse
del timido voler che non s'apriva,
parlando, di parlare ardir mi porse.

Ond'io: "Maestro, il mio veder s'avviva
sì nel tuo lume, ch'io discerno chiaro
quanto la tua ragion parta o descriva.

Però ti prego, dolce padre caro,
che mi dimostri amore, a cui reduci
ogne buono operare e 'l suo contraro".

"Drizza", disse, "ver' me l'agute luci
de lo 'ntelletto, e fieti manifesto
l'error de' ciechi che si fanno duci.

L'animo, ch'è creato ad amar presto,
ad ogne cosa è mobile che piace,
tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto.

Vostra apprensiva da esser verace
tragge intenzione, e dentro a voi la spiega,
sì che l'animo ad essa volger face;

e se, rivolto, inver’ di lei si piega,
quel piegare è amor, quell’è natura
che per piacer di novo in voi si lega. 27

Poi, come ‘l foco movesi in altura
per la sua forma ch’è nata a salire
là dove più in sua matera dura, 30

così l’animo preso entra in disire,
ch’è moto spiritale, e mai non posa
fin che la cosa amata il fa gioire. 33

Or ti puote apparer quant’è nascosa
la veritate a la gente ch’avvera
ciascun amore in sé laudabil cosa; 36

però che forse appar la sua matera
sempre esser buona, ma non ciascun segno
è buono, ancor che buona sia la cera”. 39

“Le tue parole e ‘l mio seguace ingegno”,
rispuos’io lui, “m’ hanno amor discoverto,
ma ciò m’ ha fatto di dubbiar più pregno; 42

ché, s’amore è di fuori a noi offerto
e l’anima non va con altro piede,
se dritta o torta va, non è suo merto”. 45

Ed elli a me: “Quanto ragion qui vede,
dir ti poss’io; da indi in là t’aspetta
pur a Beatrice, ch’è opra di fede. 48

Ogne forma sustanzïal, che setta
è da matera ed è con lei unita,
specifica vertute ha in sé colletta, 51

la qual sanza operar non è sentita,
né si dimostra mai che per effetto,
come per verdi fronde in pianta vita. 54

Però, là onde vegna lo ‘ntelletto
de le prime notizie, omo non sape,
e de’ primi appetibili l’affetto,

che sono in voi sì come studio in ape
di far lo mele; e questa prima voglia
merto di lode o di biasmo non cape.

Or perché a questa ogn’altra si raccoglia,
innata v’è la virtù che consiglia,
e de l’assenso de’ tener la soglia.

Quest’è ‘l principio là onde si piglia
ragion di meritare in voi, secondo
che buoni e rei amori accoglie e viglia.

Color che ragionando andaro al fondo,
s’accorser d’esta innata libertate;
però moralità lasciaro al mondo.

Onde, poniam che di necessitate
surga ogne amor che dentro a voi s’accende,
di ritenerlo è in voi la podestate.

La nobile virtù Beatrice intende
per lo libero arbitrio, e però guarda
che l’abbi a mente, s’a parlar ten prende”.

La luna, quasi a mezza notte tarda,
facea le stelle a noi parer più rade,
fatta com’un secchion che tuttor arda;

e correa contra ‘l ciel per quelle strade
che ‘l sole infiamma allor che quel da Roma
tra ‘ Sardi e ‘ Corsi il vede quando cade.

E quell’ombra gentil per cui si noma
Pietola più che villa mantoana,
del mio carcar diposta avea la soma;

per ch’io, che la ragione aperta e piana
sovra le mie quistioni avea ricolta,
stava com’om che sonnolento vana.

Ma questa sonnolenza mi fu tolta
subitamente da gente che dopo
le nostre spalle a noi era già volta.

E quale Ismeno già vide e Asopo
lungo di sé di notte furia e calca,
pur che i Teban di Bacco avesser uopo,

cotal per quel giron suo passo falca,
per quel ch’io vidi di color, venendo,
cui buon volere e giusto amor cavalca.

Tosto fur sovr’a noi, perché correndo
si movea tutta quella turba magna;
e due dinanzi gridavan piangendo:

“Maria corse con fretta a la montagna;
e Cesare, per soggiogare Ilerda,
punse Marsilia e poi corse in Ispagna”.

“Ratto, ratto, che ‘l tempo non si perda
per poco amor”, gridavan li altri appresso,
“che studio di ben far grazia rinverda”.

“O gente in cui fervore aguto adesso
ricompie forse negligenza e indugio
da voi per tepidezza in ben far messo,

questi che vive, e certo i’ non vi bugio,
vuole andar sù, pur che ‘l sol ne riluca;
però ne dite ond’è presso il pertugio”.

Parole furon queste del mio duca;
e un di quelli spirti disse: “Vieni
di retro a noi, e troverai la buca.

Noi siam di voglia a muoverci sì pieni,
che restar non potem; però perdona,
se villania nostra giustizia tieni.

Io fui abate in San Zeno a Verona
sotto lo ‘mperio del buon Barbarossa,
di cui dolente ancor Milan ragiona.

E tale ha già l’un piè dentro la fossa,
che tosto piangerà quel monastero,
e tristo fia d’avere avuta possa;

perché suo figlio, mal del corpo intero,
e de la mente peggio, e che mal nacque,
ha posto in loco di suo pastor vero”.

Io non so se più disse o s’ei si tacque,
tant’era già di là da noi trascorso;
ma questo intesi, e ritener mi piacque.

E quei che m’era ad ogne uopo soccorso
disse: “Volgiti qua: vedine due
venir dando a l’accidïa di morso”.

Di retro a tutti dicean: “Prima fue
morta la gente a cui il mar s’aperse,
che vedesse Iordan le rede sue.

E quella che l’affanno non sofferse
fino a la fine col figlio d’Anchise,
sé stessa a vita sanza gloria offerse”.

Poi quando fuor da noi tanto divise
quell’ombre, che veder più non potiersi,
novo pensiero dentro a me si mise,

del qual più altri nacquero e diversi;
e tanto d’uno in altro vaneggiai,
che li occhi per vaghezza ricopersi,

e ‘l pensamento in sogno trasmutai.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciannovesimo

Canto XIX, ove tratta de la essenza del quinto girone e qui si purga la colpa de l'avarizia; dove nomina papa Adriano nato di Genova de' conti da Lavagna.

Ne l'ora che non può 'l calor dïurno
intepidar più 'l freddo de la luna,
vinto da terra, e talor da Saturno

- quando i geomanti lor Maggior Fortuna
veggiono in orïente, innanzi a l'alba,
surger per via che poco le sta bruna -,

mi venne in sogno una femmina balba,
ne li occhi guercia, e sovra i piè distorta,
con le man monche, e di colore scialba.

Io la mirava; e come 'l sol conforta
le fredde membra che la notte aggrava,
così lo sguardo mio le facea scorta

la lingua, e poscia tutta la drizzava
in poco d'ora, e lo smarrito volto,
com'amor vuol, così le colorava.

Poi ch'ell'avea 'l parlar così disciolto,
cominciava a cantar sì, che con pena
da lei avrei mio intento rivolto.

"Io son", cantava, "io son dolce serena,
che ' marinari in mezzo mar dismago;
tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!

Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago
al canto mio; e qual meco s'ausa,
rado sen parte; sì tutto l'appago!".

Ancor non era sua bocca richiusa,
quand'una donna apparve santa e presta

lunghesso me per far colei confusa.

“O Virgilio, Virgilio, chi è questa?”,
fieramente dicea; ed el venìa
con li occhi fitti pur in quella onesta.

L’altra prendea, e dinanzi l’apria
fendendo i drappi, e mostravami ‘l ventre;
quel mi svegliò col puzzo che n’uscia.

Io mossi li occhi, e ‘l buon maestro: “Almen tre
voci t’ ho messe!”, dicea, “Surgi e vieni;
troviam l’aperta per la qual tu entre”.

Sù mi levai, e tutti eran già pieni
de l’alto dì i giron del sacro monte,
e andavam col sol novo a le reni.

Seguendo lui, portava la mia fronte
come colui che l’ ha di pensier carca,
che fa di sé un mezzo arco di ponte;

quand’io udi’ “Venite; qui si varca”
parlare in modo soave e benigno,
qual non si sente in questa mortal marca.

Con l’ali aperte, che parean di cigno,
volseci in sù colui che sì parlonne
tra due pareti del duro macigno.

Mosse le penne poi e ventilonne,
‘Qui lugent’affermando esser beati,
ch’avran di consolar l’anime donne.

“Che hai che pur inver’ la terra guati?”,
la guida mia incominciò a dirmi,
poco amendue da l’angel sormontati.

E io: “Con tanta sospeccion fa irmi
novella visïon ch’a sé mi piega,

sì ch’io non posso dal pensar partirmi”.

“Vedesti”, disse, “quell’antica strega
che sola sovr’a noi omai si piagne;
vedesti come l’uom da lei si slega.

Bastiti, e batti a terra le calcagne;
li occhi rivolgi al logoro che gira
lo rege etterno con le rote magne”.

Quale ‘l falcon, che prima a’ piè si mira,
indi si volge al grido e si protende
per lo disio del pasto che là il tira,

tal mi fec’io; e tal, quanto si fende
la roccia per dar via a chi va suso,
n’andai infin dove ‘l cerchiar si prende.

Com’io nel quinto giro fui dischiuso,
vidi gente per esso che piangea,
giacendo a terra tutta volta in giuso.

‘Adhaesit pavimento anima mea’
sentia dir lor con sì alti sospiri,
che la parola a pena s’intendea.

“O eletti di Dio, li cui soffriri
e giustizia e speranza fa men duri,
drizzate noi verso li alti saliri”.

“Se voi venite dal giacer sicuri,
e volete trovar la via più tosto,
le vostre destre sien sempre di fori”.

Così pregò ‘l poeta, e sì risposto
poco dinanzi a noi ne fu; per ch’io
nel parlare avvisai l’altro nascosto,

e volsi li occhi a li occhi al segnor mio:
ond’elli m’assentì con lieto cenno

ciò che chiedea la vista del disio.

Poi ch'io potei di me fare a mio senno,
trassimi sovra quella creatura
le cui parole pria notar mi fenno,

dicendo: "Spirto in cui pianger matura
quel sanza 'l quale a Dio tornar non pòssi,
sosta un poco per me tua maggior cura.

Chi fosti e perché vòlti avete i dossi
al sù, mi dì, e se vuo' ch'io t'impetri
cosa di là ond'io vivendo mossi".

Ed elli a me: "Perché i nostri diretri
rivolga il cielo a sé, saprai; ma prima
scias quod ego fui successor Petri.

Intra Sïestri e Chiaveri s'adima
una fiumana bella, e del suo nome
lo titol del mio sangue fa sua cima.

Un mese e poco più prova' io come
pesa il gran manto a chi dal fango il guarda,
che piuma sembran tutte l'altre some.

La mia conversïone, omè!, fu tarda;
ma, come fatto fui roman pastore,
così scopersi la vita bugiarda.

Vidi che lì non s'acquetava il core,
né più salir potiesi in quella vita;
per che di questa in me s'accese amore.

Fino a quel punto misera e partita
da Dio anima fui, del tutto avara;
or, come vedi, qui ne son punita.

Quel ch'avarizia fa, qui si dichiara
in purgazion de l'anime converse;

e nulla pena il monte ha più amara.

Sì come l’occhio nostro non s’aderse
in alto, fisso a le cose terrene,
così giustizia qui a terra il merse.

Come avarizia spense a ciascun bene
lo nostro amore, onde operar perdési,
così giustizia qui stretti ne tene,

ne’ piedi e ne le man legati e presi;
e quanto fia piacer del giusto Sire,
tanto staremo immobili e distesi”.

Io m’era inginocchiato e volea dire;
ma com’io cominciai ed el s’accorse,
solo ascoltando, del mio reverire,

“Qual cagion”, disse, “in giù così ti torse?”.
E io a lui: “Per vostra dignitate
mia coscïenza dritto mi rimorse”.

“Drizza le gambe, lèvati sù, frate!”,
rispuose; “non errar: conservo sono
teco e con li altri ad una podestate.

Se mai quel santo evangelico suono
che dice ‘Neque nubent’intendesti,
ben puoi veder perch’io così ragiono.

Vattene omai: non vo’ che più t’arresti;
ché la tua stanza mio pianger disagia,
col qual maturo ciò che tu dicesti.

Nepote ho io di là c’ ha nome Alagia,
buona da sé, pur che la nostra casa
non faccia lei per essempro malvagia;

e questa sola di là m’è rimasa”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventesimo

Canto XX, ove si tratta del sopradetto girone e de la sopradetta colpa de l'avarizia.

Contra miglior voler voler mal pugna;
onde contra 'l piacer mio, per piacerli,
trassi de l'acqua non sazia la spugna.

Mossimi; e 'l duca mio si mosse per li
luoghi spediti pur lungo la roccia,
come si va per muro stretto a' merli;

ché la gente che fonde a goccia a goccia
per li occhi il mal che tutto 'l mondo occupa,
da l'altra parte in fuor troppo s'approccia.

Maladetta sie tu, antica lupa,
che più che tutte l'altre bestie hai preda
per la tua fame sanza fine cupa!

O ciel, nel cui girar par che si creda
le condizion di qua giù trasmutarsi,
quando verrà per cui questa disceda?

Noi andavam con passi lenti e scarsi,
e io attento a l'ombre, ch'i' sentia
pietosamente piangere e lagnarsi;

e per ventura udi' "Dolce Maria!"
dinanzi a noi chiamar così nel pianto
come fa donna che in parturir sia;

e seguitar: "Povera fosti tanto,
quanto veder si può per quello ospizio
dove sponesti il tuo portato santo".

Seguentemente intesi: "O buon Fabrizio,
con povertà volesti anzi virtute

che gran ricchezza posseder con vizio”. 27

Queste parole m’eran sì piaciute,
ch’io mi trassi oltre per aver contezza
di quello spirto onde parean venute. 30

Esso parlava ancor de la larghezza
che fece Niccolò a le pulcelle,
per condurre ad onor lor giovinezza. 33

“O anima che tanto ben favelle,
dimmi chi fosti”, dissi, “e perché sola
tu queste degne lode rinovelle. 36

Non fia sanza mercé la tua parola,
s’io ritorno a compiér lo cammin corto
di quella vita ch’al termine vola”. 39

Ed elli: “Io ti dirò, non per conforto
ch’io attenda di là, ma perché tanta
grazia in te luce prima che sie morto. 42

Io fui radice de la mala pianta
che la terra cristiana tutta aduggia,
sì che buon frutto rado se ne schianta. 45

Ma se Doagio, Lilla, Guanto e Bruggia
potesser, tosto ne saria vendetta;
e io la cheggio a lui che tutto giuggia. 48

Chiamato fui di là Ugo Ciappetta;
di me son nati i Filippi e i Luigi
per cui novellamente è Francia retta. 51

Figliuol fu’ io d’un beccaio di Parigi:
quando li regi antichi venner meno
tutti, fuor ch’un renduto in panni bigi, 54

trova’ mi stretto ne le mani il freno
del governo del regno, e tanta possa

di nuovo acquisto, e sì d’amici pieno, 57

ch’a la corona vedova promossa
la testa di mio figlio fu, dal quale
cominciar di costor le sacrate ossa. 60

Mentre che la gran dota provenzale
al sangue mio non tolse la vergogna,
poco valea, ma pur non facea male. 63

Lì cominciò con forza e con menzogna
la sua rapina; e poscia, per ammenda,
Pontì e Normandia prese e Guascogna. 66

Carlo venne in Italia e, per ammenda,
vittima fé di Curradino; e poi
ripinse al ciel Tommaso, per ammenda. 69

Tempo vegg’io, non molto dopo ancoi,
che tragge un altro Carlo fuor di Francia,
per far conoscer meglio e sé e ‘ suoi. 72

Sanz’arme n’esce e solo con la lancia
con la qual giostrò Giuda, e quella ponta
sì, ch’a Fiorenza fa scoppiar la pancia. 75

Quindi non terra, ma peccato e onta
guadagnerà, per sé tanto più grave,
quanto più lieve simil danno conta. 78

L’altro, che già uscì preso di nave,
veggio vender sua figlia e patteggiarne
come fanno i corsar de l’altre schiave. 81

O avarizia, che puoi tu più farne,
poscia c’ ha’ il mio sangue a te sì tratto,
che non si cura de la propria carne? 84

Perché men paia il mal futuro e ‘l fatto,
veggio in Alagna intrar lo fiordaliso,

e nel vicario suo Cristo esser catto. 87

Veggiolo un’altra volta esser deriso;
veggio rinovellar l’aceto e ‘l fiele,
e tra vivi ladroni esser anciso. 90

Veggio il novo Pilato sì crudele,
che ciò nol sazia, ma sanza decreto
portar nel Tempio le cupide vele. 93

O Segnor mio, quando sarò io lieto
a veder la vendetta che, nascosa,
fa dolce l’ira tua nel tuo secreto? 96

Ciò ch’io dicea di quell’unica sposa
de lo Spirito Santo e che ti fece
verso me volger per alcuna chiosa, 99

tanto è risposto a tutte nostre prece
quanto ‘l dì dura; ma com’el s’annotta,
contrario suon prendemo in quella vece. 102

Noi repetiam Pigmalïon allotta,
cui traditore e ladro e paricida
fece la voglia sua de l’oro ghiotta; 105

e la miseria de l’avaro Mida,
che seguì a la sua dimanda gorda,
per la qual sempre convien che si rida. 108

Del folle Acàn ciascun poi si ricorda,
come furò le spoglie, sì che l’ira
di Iosüè qui par ch’ancor lo morda. 111

Indi accusiam col marito Saffira;
lodiamo i calci ch’ebbe Elïodoro;
e in infamia tutto ‘l monte gira 114

Polinestòr ch’ancise Polidoro;
ultimamente ci si grida: “Crasso,

dilci, che ‘l sai: di che sapore è l’oro?”.

Talor parla l’uno alto e l’altro basso,
secondo l’affezion ch’ad ir ci sprona
ora a maggiore e ora a minor passo:

però al ben che ‘l dì ci si ragiona,
dianzi non era io sol; ma qui da presso
non alzava la voce altra persona”.

Noi eravam partiti già da esso,
e brigavam di soverchiar la strada
tanto quanto al poder n’era permesso,

quand’io senti’, come cosa che cada,
tremar lo monte; onde mi prese un gelo
qual prender suol colui ch’a morte vada.

Certo non si scoteo sì forte Delo,
pria che Latona in lei facesse ‘l nido
a parturir li due occhi del cielo.

Poi cominciò da tutte parti un grido
tal, che ‘l maestro inverso me si feo,
dicendo: “Non dubbiar, mentr’io ti guido”.

‘Glorïa in excelsis’ tutti ‘Deo’
dicean, per quel ch’io da’ vicin compresi,
onde intender lo grido si poteo.

No’ istavamo immobili e sospesi
come i pastor che prima udir quel canto,
fin che ‘l tremar cessò ed el compiési.

Poi ripigliammo nostro cammin santo,
guardando l’ombre che giacean per terra,
tornate già in su l’usato pianto.

Nulla ignoranza mai con tanta guerra
mi fé desideroso di sapere,

se la memoria mia in ciò non erra,

quanta pareami allor, pensando, avere;
né per la fretta dimandare er’oso,
né per me lì potea cosa vedere:

così m’andava timido e pensoso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventunesimo

Canto XXI, ove si tratta del sopradetto quinto girone, dove si punisce e purga la predetta colpa de l'avarizia e la colpa de la prodigalitade; dove truova Stazio poeta tolosano.

La sete natural che mai non sazia
se non con l'acqua onde la femminetta
samaritana domandò la grazia,

mi travagliava, e pungeami la fretta
per la 'mpacciata via dietro al mio duca,
e condoleami a la giusta vendetta.

Ed ecco, sì come ne scrive Luca
che Cristo apparve a' due ch'erano in via,
già surto fuor de la sepulcral buca,

ci apparve un'ombra, e dietro a noi venìa,
dal piè guardando la turba che giace;
né ci addemmo di lei, sì parlò pria,

dicendo: "O frati miei, Dio vi dea pace".
Noi ci volgemmo sùbiti, e Virgilio
rendéli 'l cenno ch'a ciò si conface.

Poi cominciò: "Nel beato concilio
ti ponga in pace la verace corte
che me rilega ne l'etterno essilio".

"Come!", diss'elli, e parte andavam forte:
"se voi siete ombre che Dio sù non degni,
chi v' ha per la sua scala tanto scorte?".

E 'l dottor mio: "Se tu riguardi a' segni
che questi porta e che l'angel profila,
ben vedrai che coi buon convien ch'e' regni.

Ma perché lei che dì e notte fila
non li avea tratta ancora la conocchia
che Cloto impone a ciascuno e compila,

l’anima sua, ch’è tua e mia serocchia,
venendo sù, non potea venir sola,
però ch’al nostro modo non adocchia.

Ond’io fui tratto fuor de l’ampia gola
d’inferno per mostrarli, e mosterrolli
oltre, quanto ‘l potrà menar mia scola.

Ma dimmi, se tu sai, perché tai crolli
diè dianzi ‘l monte, e perché tutto ad una
parve gridare infino a’ suoi piè molli”.

Sì mi diè, dimandando, per la cruna
del mio disio, che pur con la speranza
si fece la mia sete men digiuna.

Quei cominciò: “Cosa non è che sanza
ordine senta la religïone
de la montagna, o che sia fuor d’usanza.

Libero è qui da ogne alterazione:
di quel che ‘l ciel da sé in sé riceve
esser ci puote, e non d’altro, cagione.

Per che non pioggia, non grando, non neve,
non rugiada, non brina più sù cade
che la scaletta di tre gradi breve;

nuvole spesse non paion né rade,
né coruscar, né figlia di Taumante,
che di là cangia sovente contrade;

secco vapor non surge più avante
ch’al sommo d’i tre gradi ch’io parlai,
dov’ ha ‘l vicario di Pietro le piante.

Trema forse più giù poco o assai;
ma per vento che ‘n terra si nasconda,
non so come, qua sù non tremò mai.

Tremaci quando alcuna anima monda
sentesi, sì che surga o che si mova
per salir sù; e tal grido seconda.

De la mondizia sol voler fa prova,
che, tutto libero a mutar convento,
l’alma sorprende, e di voler le giova.

Prima vuol ben, ma non lascia il talento
che divina giustizia, contra voglia,
come fu al peccar, pone al tormento.

E io, che son giaciuto a questa doglia
cinquecent’anni e più, pur mo sentii
libera volontà di miglior soglia:

però sentisti il tremoto e li pii
spiriti per lo monte render lode
a quel Segnor, che tosto sù li ‘nvii”.

Così ne disse; e però ch’el si gode
tanto del ber quant’è grande la sete,
non saprei dir quant’el mi fece prode.

E ‘l savio duca: “Omai veggio la rete
che qui vi ‘mpiglia e come si scalappia,
perché ci trema e di che congaudete.

Ora chi fosti, piacciati ch’io sappia,
e perché tanti secoli giaciuto
qui se’, ne le parole tue mi cappia”.

“Nel tempo che ‘l buon Tito, con l’aiuto
del sommo rege, vendicò le fóra
ond’uscì ‘l sangue per Giuda venduto,

col nome che più dura e più onora
era io di là", rispuose quello spirto,
"famoso assai, ma non con fede ancora.

Tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirto,
che, tolosano, a sé mi trasse Roma,
dove mertai le tempie ornar di mirto.

Stazio la gente ancor di là mi noma:
cantai di Tebe, e poi del grande Achille;
ma caddi in via con la seconda soma.

Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville,
che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma
onde sono allumati più di mille;

de l'Eneïda dico, la qual mamma
fummi, e fummi nutrice, poetando:
sanz'essa non fermai peso di dramma.

E per esser vivuto di là quando
visse Virgilio, assentirei un sole
più che non deggio al mio uscir di bando".

Volser Virgilio a me queste parole
con viso che, tacendo, disse 'Taci';
ma non può tutto la virtù che vuole;

ché riso e pianto son tanto seguaci
a la passion di che ciascun si spicca,
che men seguon voler ne' più veraci.

Io pur sorrisi come l'uom ch'ammicca;
per che l'ombra si tacque, e riguardommi
ne li occhi ove 'l sembiante più si ficca;

e "Se tanto labore in bene assommi",
disse, "perché la tua faccia testeso
un lampeggiar di riso dimostrommi?".

Or son io d’una parte e d’altra preso:
l’una mi fa tacer, l’altra scongiura
ch’io dica; ond’io sospiro, e sono inteso

dal mio maestro, e “Non aver paura”,
mi dice, “di parlar; ma parla e digli
quel ch’e’ dimanda con cotanta cura”.

Ond’io: “Forse che tu ti maravigli,
antico spirto, del rider ch’io fei;
ma più d’ammirazion vo’ che ti pigli.

Questi che guida in alto li occhi miei,
è quel Virgilio dal qual tu togliesti
forte a cantar de li uomini e d’i dèi.

Se cagion altra al mio rider credesti,
lasciala per non vera, ed esser credi
quelle parole che di lui dicesti”.

Già s’inchinava ad abbracciar li piedi
al mio dottor, ma el li disse: “Frate,
non far, ché tu se’ ombra e ombra vedi”.

Ed ei surgendo: “Or puoi la quantitate
comprender de l’amor ch’a te mi scalda,
quand’io dismento nostra vanitate,

trattando l’ombre come cosa salda”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiduesimo

Canto XXII, dove tratta de la qualità del sesto girone, dove si punisce e purga la colpa e vizio de la gola; e qui narra Stazio sua purgazione e sua conversione a la cristiana fede.

Già era l’angel dietro a noi rimaso,
l’angel che n’avea vòlti al sesto giro,
avendomi dal viso un colpo raso;

e quei c’ hanno a giustizia lor disiro
detto n’avea beati, e le sue voci
con ‘sitiunt’, sanz’altro, ciò forniro.

E io più lieve che per l’altre foci
m’andava, sì che sanz’alcun labore
seguiva in sù li spiriti veloci;

quando Virgilio incominciò: “Amore,
acceso di virtù, sempre altro accese,
pur che la fiamma sua paresse fore;

onde da l’ora che tra noi discese
nel limbo de lo ‘nferno Giovenale,
che la tua affezion mi fé palese,

mia benvoglienza inverso te fu quale
più strinse mai di non vista persona,
sì ch’or mi parran corte queste scale.

Ma dimmi, e come amico mi perdona
se troppa sicurtà m’allarga il freno,
e come amico omai meco ragiona:

come poté trovar dentro al tuo seno
loco avarizia, tra cotanto senno
di quanto per tua cura fosti pieno?”.

Queste parole Stazio mover fenno
un poco a riso pria; poscia rispuose:
“Ogne tuo dir d’amor m’è caro cenno.

Veramente più volte appaion cose
che danno a dubitar falsa matera
per le vere ragion che son nascose.

La tua dimanda tuo creder m’avvera
esser ch’i’ fossi avaro in l’altra vita,
forse per quella cerchia dov’io era.

Or sappi ch’avarizia fu partita
troppo da me, e questa dismisura
migliaia di lunari hanno punita.

E se non fosse ch’io drizzai mia cura,
quand’io intesi là dove tu chiame,
crucciato quasi a l’umana natura:

‘Per che non reggi tu, o sacra fame
de l’oro, l’appetito de’ mortali?’,
voltando sentirei le giostre grame.

Allor m’accorsi che troppo aprir l’ali
potean le mani a spendere, e pente’ mi
così di quel come de li altri mali.

Quanti risurgeran coi crini scemi
per ignoranza, che di questa pecca
toglie ‘l penter vivendo e ne li stremi!

E sappie che la colpa che rimbecca
per dritta opposizione alcun peccato,
con esso insieme qui suo verde secca;

però, s’io son tra quella gente stato
che piange l’avarizia, per purgarmi,
per lo contrario suo m’è incontrato”.

“Or quando tu cantasti le crude armi
de la doppia trestizia di Giocasta”,
disse ‘l cantor de’ buccolici carmi,

“per quello che Clïò teco lì tasta,
non par che ti facesse ancor fedele
la fede, sanza qual ben far non basta.

Se così è, qual sole o quai candele
ti stenebraron sì, che tu drizzasti
poscia di retro al pescator le vele?”.

Ed elli a lui: “Tu prima m’invïasti
verso Parnaso a ber ne le sue grotte,
e prima appresso Dio m’alluminasti.

Facesti come quei che va di notte,
che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova,
ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte,

quando dicesti: ‘Secol si rinova;
torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,
e progenïe scende da ciel nova’.

Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano:
ma perché veggi mei ciò ch’io disegno,
a colorare stenderò la mano.

Già era ‘l mondo tutto quanto pregno
de la vera credenza, seminata
per li messaggi de l’etterno regno;

e la parola tua sopra toccata
si consonava a’ nuovi predicanti;
ond’io a visitarli presi usata.

Vennermi poi parendo tanto santi,
che, quando Domizian li perseguette,
sanza mio lagrimar non fur lor pianti;

e mentre che di là per me si stette,
io li sovvenni, e i lor dritti costumi
fer dispregiare a me tutte altre sette. 87

E pria ch'io conducessi i Greci a' fiumi
di Tebe poetando, ebb'io battesmo;
ma per paura chiuso cristian fu' mi, 90

lungamente mostrando paganesmo;
e questa tepidezza il quarto cerchio
cerchiar mi fé più che 'l quarto centesmo. 93

Tu dunque, che levato hai il coperchio
che m'ascondeva quanto bene io dico,
mentre che del salire avem soverchio, 96

dimmi dov'è Terrenzio nostro antico,
Cecilio e Plauto e Varro, se lo sai:
dimmi se son dannati, e in qual vico". 99

"Costoro e Persio e io e altri assai",
rispuose il duca mio, "siam con quel Greco
che le Muse lattar più ch'altri mai, 102

nel primo cinghio del carcere cieco;
spesse fïate ragioniam del monte
che sempre ha le nutrice nostre seco. 105

Euripide v'è nosco e Antifonte,
Simonide, Agatone e altri piùe
Greci che già di lauro ornar la fronte. 108

Quivi si veggion de le genti tue
Antigone, Deïfile e Argia,
e Ismene sì trista come fue. 111

Védeisi quella che mostrò Langia;
èvvi la figlia di Tiresia, e Teti,
e con le suore sue Deïdamia". 114

Tacevansi ambedue già li poeti,
di novo attenti a riguardar dintorno,
liberi da saliri e da pareti;

e già le quattro ancelle eran del giorno
rimase a dietro, e la quinta era al temo,
drizzando pur in sù l'ardente corno,

quando il mio duca: "Io credo ch'a lo stremo
le destre spalle volger ne convegna,
girando il monte come far solemo".

Così l'usanza fu lì nostra insegna,
e prendemmo la via con men sospetto
per l'assentir di quell'anima degna.

Elli givan dinanzi, e io soletto
di retro, e ascoltava i lor sermoni,
ch'a poetar mi davano intelletto.

Ma tosto ruppe le dolci ragioni
un alber che trovammo in mezza strada,
con pomi a odorar soavi e buoni;

e come abete in alto si digrada
di ramo in ramo, così quello in giuso,
cred'io, perché persona sù non vada.

Dal lato onde 'l cammin nostro era chiuso,
cadea de l'alta roccia un liquor chiaro
e si spandeva per le foglie suso.

Li due poeti a l'alber s'appressaro;
e una voce per entro le fronde
gridò: "Di questo cibo avrete caro".

Poi disse: "Più pensava Maria onde
fosser le nozze orrevoli e intere,
ch'a la sua bocca, ch'or per voi risponde.

E le Romane antiche, per lor bere,
contente furon d’acqua; e Danïello
dispregiò cibo e acquistò savere.

Lo secol primo, quant’oro fu bello,
fé savorose con fame le ghiande,
e nettare con sete ogne ruscello.

Mele e locuste furon le vivande
che nodriro il Batista nel diserto;
per ch’elli è glorïoso e tanto grande

quanto per lo Vangelio v’è aperto”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventitreesimo

Canto XXIII, dove si tratta del sopradetto girone e di quella medesima colpa de la gola, e sgrida contro a le donne fiorentine; dove truova Forese de' Donati di Fiorenze col quale molto parla.

Mentre che li occhi per la fronda verde
ficcava ïo sì come far suole
chi dietro a li uccellin sua vita perde,

lo più che padre mi dicea: "Figliuole,
vienne oramai, ché 'l tempo che n'è imposto
più utilmente compartir si vuole".

Io volsi 'l viso, e 'l passo non men tosto,
appresso i savi, che parlavan sìe,
che l'andar mi facean di nullo costo.

Ed ecco piangere e cantar s'udìe
'Labïa mëa, Domine' per modo
tal, che diletto e doglia parturìe.

"O dolce padre, che è quel ch'i' odo?",
comincia' io; ed elli: "Ombre che vanno
forse di lor dover solvendo il nodo".

Sì come i peregrin pensosi fanno,
giugnendo per cammin gente non nota,
che si volgono ad essa e non restanno,

così di retro a noi, più tosto mota,
venendo e trapassando ci ammirava
d'anime turba tacita e devota.

Ne li occhi era ciascuna oscura e cava,
palida ne la faccia, e tanto scema
che da l'ossa la pelle s'informava.

Non credo che così a buccia strema
Erisittone fosse fatto secco,
per digiunar, quando più n’ebbe tema.

Io dicea fra me stesso pensando: ‘Ecco
la gente che perdé Ierusalemme,
quando Maria nel figlio diè di becco!’.

Parean l’occhiaie anella sanza gemme:
chi nel viso de li uomini legge ‘omo’
ben avria quivi conosciuta l’emme.

Chi crederebbe che l’odor d’un pomo
sì governasse, generando brama,
e quel d’un’acqua, non sappiendo como?

Già era in ammirar che sì li affama,
per la cagione ancor non manifesta
di lor magrezza e di lor trista squama,

ed ecco del profondo de la testa
volse a me li occhi un’ombra e guardò fiso;
poi gridò forte: “Qual grazia m’è questa?”.

Mai non l’avrei riconosciuto al viso;
ma ne la voce sua mi fu palese
ciò che l’aspetto in sé avea conquiso.

Questa favilla tutta mi raccese
mia conoscenza a la cangiata labbia,
e ravvisai la faccia di Forese.

“Deh, non contendere a l’asciutta scabbia
che mi scolora”, pregava, “la pelle,
né a difetto di carne ch’io abbia;

ma dimmi il ver di te, dì chi son quelle
due anime che là ti fanno scorta;
non rimaner che tu non mi favelle!”.

“La faccia tua, ch’io lagrimai già morta,
mi dà di pianger mo non minor doglia”,
rispuos’io lui, “veggendola sì torta.

Però mi dì, per Dio, che sì vi sfoglia;
non mi far dir mentr’io mi maraviglio,
ché mal può dir chi è pien d’altra voglia”.

Ed elli a me: “De l’etterno consiglio
cade vertù ne l’acqua e ne la pianta
rimasa dietro, ond’io sì m’assottiglio.

Tutta esta gente che piangendo canta
per seguitar la gola oltra misura,
in fame e ‘n sete qui si rifà santa.

Di bere e di mangiar n’accende cura
l’odor ch’esce del pomo e de lo sprazzo
che si distende su per sua verdura.

E non pur una volta, questo spazzo
girando, si rinfresca nostra pena:
io dico pena, e dovria dir sollazzo,

ché quella voglia a li alberi ci mena
che menò Cristo lieto a dire ‘Elì’,
quando ne liberò con la sua vena”.

E io a lui: “Forese, da quel dì
nel qual mutasti mondo a miglior vita,
cinqu’ anni non son vòlti infino a qui.

Se prima fu la possa in te finita
di peccar più, che sovvenisse l’ora
del buon dolor ch’a Dio ne rimarita,

come se’ tu qua sù venuto ancora?
Io ti credea trovar là giù di sotto,
dove tempo per tempo si ristora”.

Ond’elli a me: “Sì tosto m’ ha condotto
a ber lo dolce assenzo d’i martìri
la Nella mia con suo pianger dirotto.

Con suoi prieghi devoti e con sospiri
tratto m’ ha de la costa ove s’aspetta,
e liberato m’ ha de li altri giri.

Tanto è a Dio più cara e più diletta
la vedovella mia, che molto amai,
quanto in bene operare è più soletta;

ché la Barbagia di Sardigna assai
ne le femmine sue più è pudica
che la Barbagia dov’io la lasciai.

O dolce frate, che vuo’ tu ch’io dica?
Tempo futuro m’è già nel cospetto,
cui non sarà quest’ora molto antica,

nel qual sarà in pergamo interdetto
a le sfacciate donne fiorentine
l’andar mostrando con le poppe il petto.

Quai barbare fuor mai, quai saracine,
cui bisognasse, per farle ir coperte,
o spiritali o altre discipline?

Ma se le svergognate fosser certe
di quel che ‘l ciel veloce loro ammanna,
già per urlare avrian le bocche aperte;

ché, se l’antiveder qui non m’inganna,
prima fien triste che le guance impeli
colui che mo si consola con nanna.

Deh, frate, or fa che più non mi ti celi!
vedi che non pur io, ma questa gente
tutta rimira là dove ‘l sol veli”.

Per ch’io a lui: “Se tu riduci a mente
qual fosti meco, e qual io teco fui,
ancor fia grave il memorar presente.

Di quella vita mi volse costui
che mi va innanzi, l’altr’ier, quando tonda
vi si mostrò la suora di colui”,

e ‘l sol mostrai; “costui per la profonda
notte menato m’ ha d’i veri morti
con questa vera carne che ‘l seconda.

Indi m’ han tratto sù li suoi conforti,
salendo e rigirando la montagna
che drizza voi che ‘l mondo fece torti.

Tanto dice di farmi sua compagna
che io sarò là dove fia Beatrice;
quivi convien che sanza lui rimagna.

Virgilio è questi che così mi dice”,
e addita’ lo; “e quest’altro è quell’ombra
per cuï scosse dianzi ogne pendice

lo vostro regno, che da sé lo sgombra”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiquattresimo

Canto XXIV nel quale si tratta del sopradetto sesto girone e di quelli che si purgano del predetto peccato e vizio de la gola; e predicesi qui alcune cose a venire de la città lucana.'

Né 'l dir l'andar, né l'andar lui più lento
facea, ma ragionando andavam forte,
sì come nave pinta da buon vento;

e l'ombre, che parean cose rimorte,
per le fosse de li occhi ammirazione
traean di me, di mio vivere accorte.

E io, continüando al mio sermone,
dissi: "Ella sen va sù forse più tarda
che non farebbe, per altrui cagione.

Ma dimmi, se tu sai, dov'è Piccarda;
dimmi s'io veggio da notar persona
tra questa gente che sì mi riguarda".

"La mia sorella, che tra bella e buona
non so qual fosse più, trïunfa lieta
ne l'alto Olimpo già di sua corona".

Sì disse prima; e poi: "Qui non si vieta
di nominar ciascun, da ch'è sì munta
nostra sembianza via per la dïeta.

Questi", e mostrò col dito, "è Bonagiunta,
Bonagiunta da Lucca; e quella faccia
di là da lui più che l'altre trapunta

ebbe la Santa Chiesa in le sue braccia:
dal Torso fu, e purga per digiuno
l'anguille di Bolsena e la vernaccia".

Molti altri mi nomò ad uno ad uno;
e del nomar parean tutti contenti,
sì ch'io però non vidi un atto bruno. 27

Vidi per fame a vòto usar li denti
Ubaldin da la Pila e Bonifazio
che pasturò col rocco molte genti. 30

Vidi messer Marchese, ch'ebbe spazio
già di bere a Forlì con men secchezza,
e sì fu tal, che non si sentì sazio. 33

Ma come fa chi guarda e poi s'apprezza
più d'un che d'altro, fei a quel da Lucca,
che più parea di me aver contezza. 36

El mormorava; e non so che "Gentucca"
sentiv'io là, ov'el sentia la piaga
de la giustizia che sì li pilucca. 39

"O anima", diss'io, "che par sì vaga
di parlar meco, fa sì ch'io t'intenda,
e te e me col tuo parlare appaga". 42

"Femmina è nata, e non porta ancor benda",
cominciò el, "che ti farà piacere
la mia città, come ch'om la riprenda. 45

Tu te n'andrai con questo antivedere:
se nel mio mormorar prendesti errore,
dichiareranti ancor le cose vere. 48

Ma dì s'i' veggio qui colui che fore
trasse le nove rime, cominciando
'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore' ". 51

E io a lui: "I' mi son un che, quando
Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo
ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando". 54

“O frate, issa vegg’io”, diss’elli, “il nodo
che ‘l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne
di qua dal dolce stil novo ch’i’ odo!

Io veggio ben come le vostre penne
di retro al dittator sen vanno strette,
che de le nostre certo non avvenne;

e qual più a gradire oltre si mette,
non vede più da l’uno a l’altro stilo”;
e, quasi contentato, si tacette.

Come li augei che vernan lungo ‘l Nilo,
alcuna volta in aere fanno schiera,
poi volan più a fretta e vanno in filo,

così tutta la gente che lì era,
volgendo ‘l viso, raffrettò suo passo,
e per magrezza e per voler leggera.

E come l’uom che di trottare è lasso,
lascia andar li compagni, e sì passeggia
fin che si sfoghi l’affollar del casso,

sì lasciò trapassar la santa greggia
Forese, e dietro meco sen veniva,
dicendo: “Quando fia ch’io ti riveggia?”.

“Non so”, rispuos’io lui, “quant’io mi viva;
ma già non fïa il tornar mio tantosto,
ch’io non sia col voler prima a la riva;

però che ‘l loco u’ fui a viver posto,
di giorno in giorno più di ben si spolpa,
e a trista ruina par disposto”.

“Or va”, diss’el; “che quei che più n’ ha colpa,
vegg’ïo a coda d’una bestia tratto
inver’ la valle ove mai non si scolpa.

La bestia ad ogne passo va più ratto,
crescendo sempre, fin ch’ella il percuote,
e lascia il corpo vilmente disfatto.

Non hanno molto a volger quelle ruote”,
e drizzò li occhi al ciel, “che ti fia chiaro
ciò che ‘l mio dir più dichiarar non puote.

Tu ti rimani omai; ché ‘l tempo è caro
in questo regno, sì ch’io perdo troppo
venendo teco sì a paro a paro”.

Qual esce alcuna volta di gualoppo
lo cavalier di schiera che cavalchi,
e va per farsi onor del primo intoppo,

tal si partì da noi con maggior valchi;
e io rimasi in via con esso i due
che fuor del mondo sì gran marescalchi.

E quando innanzi a noi intrato fue,
che li occhi miei si fero a lui seguaci,
come la mente a le parole sue,

parvermi i rami gravidi e vivaci
d’un altro pomo, e non molto lontani
per esser pur allora vòlto in laci.

Vidi gente sott’esso alzar le mani
e gridar non so che verso le fronde,
quasi bramosi fantolini e vani

che pregano, e ‘l pregato non risponde,
ma, per fare esser ben la voglia acuta,
tien alto lor disio e nol nasconde.

Poi si partì sì come ricreduta;
e noi venimmo al grande arbore adesso,
che tanti prieghi e lagrime rifiuta.

“Trapassate oltre sanza farvi presso:
legno è più sù che fu morso da Eva,
e questa pianta si levò da esso”.

Sì tra le frasche non so chi diceva;
per che Virgilio e Stazio e io, ristretti,
oltre andavam dal lato che si leva.

“Ricordivi”, dicea, “d’i maladetti
nei nuvoli formati, che, satolli,
Tesëo combatter co’ doppi petti;

e de li Ebrei ch’al ber si mostrar molli,
per che no i volle Gedeon compagni,
quando inver’ Madïan discese i colli”.

Sì accostati a l’un d’i due vivagni
passammo, udendo colpe de la gola
seguite già da miseri guadagni.

Poi, rallargati per la strada sola,
ben mille passi e più ci portar oltre,
contemplando ciascun sanza parola.

“Che andate pensando sì voi sol tre?”,
sùbita voce disse; ond’io mi scossi
come fan bestie spaventate e poltre.

Drizzai la testa per veder chi fossi;
e già mai non si videro in fornace
vetri o metalli sì lucenti e rossi,

com’io vidi un che dicea: “S’a voi piace
montare in sù, qui si convien dar volta;
quinci si va chi vuole andar per pace”.

L’aspetto suo m’avea la vista tolta;
per ch’io mi volsi dietro a’ miei dottori,
com’om che va secondo ch’elli ascolta.

E quale, annunziatrice de li albori,
l’aura di maggio movesi e olezza,
tutta impregnata da l’erba e da’ fiori;

tal mi senti’ un vento dar per mezza
la fronte, e ben senti’ mover la piuma,
che fé sentir d’ambrosïa l’orezza.

E senti’ dir: “Beati cui alluma
tanto di grazia, che l’amor del gusto
nel petto lor troppo disir non fuma,

esurïendo sempre quanto è giusto!”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto venticinquesimo

Canto XXV, lo quale tratta de l'essenzia del settimo girone, dove si punisce la colpa e peccato contro a natura ed ermafrodito sotto il vizio de la lussuria; e prima tratta alquanto del precedente purgamento de' ghiotti, dove Stazio poeta fae una distinzione sopra la natura umana.

Ora era onde 'l salir non volea storpio;
ché 'l sole avëa il cerchio di merigge
lasciato al Tauro e la notte a lo Scorpio:

per che, come fa l'uom che non s'affigge
ma vassi a la via sua, che che li appaia,
se di bisogno stimolo il trafigge,

così intrammo noi per la callaia,
uno innanzi altro prendendo la scala
che per artezza i salitor dispaia.

E quale il cicognin che leva l'ala
per voglia di volare, e non s'attenta
d'abbandonar lo nido, e giù la cala;

tal era io con voglia accesa e spenta
di dimandar, venendo infino a l'atto
che fa colui ch'a dicer s'argomenta.

Non lasciò, per l'andar che fosse ratto,
lo dolce padre mio, ma disse: "Scocca
l'arco del dir, che 'nfino al ferro hai tratto".

Allor sicuramente apri' la bocca
e cominciai: "Come si può far magro
là dove l'uopo di nodrir non tocca?".

"Se t'ammentassi come Meleagro
si consumò al consumar d'un stizzo,
non fora", disse, "a te questo sì agro;

e se pensassi come, al vostro guizzo,
guizza dentro a lo specchio vostra image,
ciò che par duro ti parrebbe vizzo. 27

Ma perché dentro a tuo voler t'adage,
ecco qui Stazio; e io lui chiamo e prego
che sia or sanator de le tue piage". 30

"Se la veduta etterna li dislego",
rispuose Stazio, "là dove tu sie,
discolpi me non potert'io far nego". 33

Poi cominciò: "Se le parole mie,
figlio, la mente tua guarda e riceve,
lume ti fiero al come che tu die. 36

Sangue perfetto, che poi non si beve
da l'assetate vene, e si rimane
quasi alimento che di mensa leve, 39

prende nel core a tutte membra umane
virtute informativa, come quello
ch'a farsi quelle per le vene vane. 42

Ancor digesto, scende ov'è più bello
tacer che dire; e quindi poscia geme
sovr'altrui sangue in natural vasello. 45

Ivi s'accoglie l'uno e l'altro insieme,
l'un disposto a patire, e l'altro a fare
per lo perfetto loco onde si preme; 48

e, giunto lui, comincia ad operare
coagulando prima, e poi avviva
ciò che per sua matera fé constare. 51

Anima fatta la virtute attiva
qual d'una pianta, in tanto differente,
che questa è in via e quella è già a riva, 54

tanto ovra poi, che già si move e sente,
come spungo marino; e indi imprende
ad organar le posse ond'è semente.

Or si spiega, figliuolo, or si distende
la virtù ch'è dal cor del generante,
dove natura a tutte membra intende.

Ma come d'animal divegna fante,
non vedi tu ancor: quest'è tal punto,
che più savio di te fé già errante,

sì che per sua dottrina fé disgiunto
da l'anima il possibile intelletto,
perché da lui non vide organo assunto.

Apri a la verità che viene il petto;
e sappi che, sì tosto come al feto
l'articular del cerebro è perfetto,

lo motor primo a lui si volge lieto
sovra tant'arte di natura, e spira
spirito novo, di vertù repleto,

che ciò che trova attivo quivi, tira
in sua sustanzia, e fassi un'alma sola,
che vive e sente e sé in sé rigira.

E perché meno ammiri la parola,
guarda il calor del sol che si fa vino,
giunto a l'omor che de la vite cola.

Quando Làchesis non ha più del lino,
solvesi da la carne, e in virtute
ne porta seco e l'umano e 'l divino:

l'altre potenze tutte quante mute;
memoria, intelligenza e volontade
in atto molto più che prima agute.

Sanza restarsi, per sé stessa cade
mirabilmente a l’una de le rive;
quivi conosce prima le sue strade.

Tosto che loco lì la circunscrive,
la virtù formativa raggia intorno
così e quanto ne le membra vive.

E come l’aere, quand’è ben pïorno,
per l’altrui raggio che ‘n sé si reflette,
di diversi color diventa addorno;

così l’aere vicin quivi si mette
e in quella forma ch’è in lui suggella
virtüalmente l’alma che ristette;

e simigliante poi a la fiammella
che segue il foco là ‘vunque si muta,
segue lo spirto sua forma novella.

Però che quindi ha poscia sua paruta,
è chiamata ombra; e quindi organa poi
ciascun sentire infino a la veduta.

Quindi parliamo e quindi ridiam noi;
quindi facciam le lagrime e ‘ sospiri
che per lo monte aver sentiti puoi.

Secondo che ci affliggono i disiri
e li altri affetti, l’ombra si figura;
e quest’è la cagion di che tu miri”.

E già venuto a l’ultima tortura
s’era per noi, e vòlto a la man destra,
ed eravamo attenti ad altra cura.

Quivi la ripa fiamma in fuor balestra,
e la cornice spira fiato in suso
che la reflette e via da lei sequestra;

ond’ir ne convenia dal lato schiuso
ad uno ad uno; e io temëa ‘l foco
quinci, e quindi temeva cader giuso.

Lo duca mio dicea: “Per questo loco
si vuol tenere a li occhi stretto il freno,
però ch’errar potrebbesi per poco”.

‘Summae Deus clementïae’ nel seno
al grande ardore allora udi’ cantando,
che di volger mi fé caler non meno;

e vidi spirti per la fiamma andando;
per ch’io guardava a loro e a’ miei passi,
compartendo la vista a quando a quando.

Appresso il fine ch’a quell’inno fassi,
gridavano alto: ‘Virum non cognosco’;
indi ricominciavan l’inno bassi.

Finitolo, anco gridavano: “Al bosco
si tenne Diana, ed Elice caccionne
che di Venere avea sentito il tòsco”.

Indi al cantar tornavano; indi donne
gridavano e mariti che fuor casti
come virtute e matrimonio imponne.

E questo modo credo che lor basti
per tutto il tempo che ‘l foco li abbruscia:
con tal cura conviene e con tai pasti

che la piaga da sezzo si ricuscia.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiseiesimo

Canto XXVI, dove tratta di quello medesimo girone e del purgamento de' predetti peccati e vizi lussuriosi; dove nomina messer Guido Guinizzelli da Bologna e molti altri.

Mentre che sì per l'orlo, uno innanzi altro,
ce n'andavamo, e spesso il buon maestro
diceami: "Guarda: giovi ch'io ti scaltro";

feriami il sole in su l'omero destro,
che già, raggiando, tutto l'occidente
mutava in bianco aspetto di cilestro;

e io facea con l'ombra più rovente
parer la fiamma; e pur a tanto indizio
vidi molt'ombre, andando, poner mente.

Questa fu la cagion che diede inizio
loro a parlar di me; e cominciarsi
a dir: "Colui non par corpo fittizio";

poi verso me, quanto potëan farsi,
certi si fero, sempre con riguardo
di non uscir dove non fosser arsi.

"O tu che vai, non per esser più tardo,
ma forse reverente, a li altri dopo,
rispondi a me che 'n sete e 'n foco ardo.

Né solo a me la tua risposta è uopo;
ché tutti questi n' hanno maggior sete
che d'acqua fredda Indo o Etïopo.

Dinne com'è che fai di te parete
al sol, pur come tu non fossi ancora
di morte intrato dentro da la rete".

Sì mi parlava un d’essi; e io mi fora
già manifesto, s’io non fossi atteso
ad altra novità ch’apparve allora;

ché per lo mezzo del cammino acceso
venne gente col viso incontro a questa,
la qual mi fece a rimirar sospeso.

Lì veggio d’ogne parte farsi presta
ciascun’ombra e basciarsi una con una
sanza restar, contente a brieve festa;

così per entro loro schiera bruna
s’ammusa l’una con l’altra formica,
forse a spïar lor via e lor fortuna.

Tosto che parton l’accoglienza amica,
prima che ‘l primo passo lì trascorra,
sopragridar ciascuna s’affatica:

la nova gente: “Soddoma e Gomorra”;
e l’altra: “Ne la vacca entra Pasife,
perché ‘l torello a sua lussuria corra”.

Poi, come grue ch’a le montagne Rife
volasser parte, e parte inver’ l’arene,
queste del gel, quelle del sole schife,

l’una gente sen va, l’altra sen vene;
e tornan, lagrimando, a’ primi canti
e al gridar che più lor si convene;

e raccostansi a me, come davanti,
essi medesmi che m’avean pregato,
attenti ad ascoltar ne’ lor sembianti.

Io, che due volte avea visto lor grato,
incominciai: “O anime sicure
d’aver, quando che sia, di pace stato,

non son rimase acerbe né mature
le membra mie di là, ma son qui meco
col sangue suo e con le sue giunture.

Quinci sù vo per non esser più cieco;
donna è di sopra che m'acquista grazia,
per che 'l mortal per vostro mondo reco.

Ma se la vostra maggior voglia sazia
tosto divegna, sì che 'l ciel v'alberghi
ch'è pien d'amore e più ampio si spazia,

ditemi, acciò ch'ancor carte ne verghi,
chi siete voi, e chi è quella turba
che se ne va di retro a' vostri terghi".

Non altrimenti stupido si turba
lo montanaro, e rimirando ammuta,
quando rozzo e salvatico s'inurba,

che ciascun'ombra fece in sua paruta;
ma poi che furon di stupore scarche,
lo qual ne li alti cuor tosto s'attuta,

"Beato te, che de le nostre marche",
ricominciò colei che pria m'inchiese,
"per morir meglio, esperïenza imbarche!

La gente che non vien con noi, offese
di ciò per che già Cesar, trïunfando,
"Regina" contra sé chiamar s'intese:

però si parton "Soddoma" gridando,
rimproverando a sé com' hai udito,
e aiutan l'arsura vergognando.

Nostro peccato fu ermafrodito;
ma perché non servammo umana legge,
seguendo come bestie l'appetito,

in obbrobrio di noi, per noi si legge,
quando partinci, il nome di colei
che s’imbestiò ne le ‘mbestiate schegge.

Or sai nostri atti e di che fummo rei:
se forse a nome vuo’ saper chi semo,
tempo non è di dire, e non saprei.

Farotti ben di me volere scemo:
son Guido Guinizzelli, e già mi purgo
per ben dolermi prima ch’a lo stremo”.

Quali ne la tristizia di Ligurgo
si fer due figli a riveder la madre,
tal mi fec’io, ma non a tanto insurgo,

quand’io odo nomar sé stesso il padre
mio e de li altri miei miglior che mai
rime d’amor usar dolci e leggiadre;

e sanza udire e dir pensoso andai
lunga fïata rimirando lui,
né, per lo foco, in là più m’appressai.

Poi che di riguardar pasciuto fui,
tutto m’offersi pronto al suo servigio
con l’affermar che fa credere altrui.

Ed elli a me: “Tu lasci tal vestigio,
per quel ch’i’ odo, in me, e tanto chiaro,
che Letè nol può tòrre né far bigio.

Ma se le tue parole or ver giuraro,
dimmi che è cagion per che dimostri
nel dire e nel guardar d’avermi caro”.

E io a lui: “Li dolci detti vostri,
che, quanto durerà l’uso moderno,
faranno cari ancora i loro incostri”.

“O frate”, disse, “questi ch’io ti cerno
col dito”, e additò un spirto innanzi,
“fu miglior fabbro del parlar materno.

Versi d’amore e prose di romanzi
soverchiò tutti; e lascia dir li stolti
che quel di Lemosì credon ch’avanzi.

A voce più ch’al ver drizzan li volti,
e così ferman sua oppinïone
prima ch’arte o ragion per lor s’ascolti.

Così fer molti antichi di Guittone,
di grido in grido pur lui dando pregio,
fin che l’ ha vinto il ver con più persone.

Or se tu hai sì ampio privilegio,
che licito ti sia l’andare al chiostro
nel quale è Cristo abate del collegio,

falli per me un dir d’un paternostro,
quanto bisogna a noi di questo mondo,
dove poter peccar non è più nostro”.

Poi, forse per dar luogo altrui secondo
che presso avea, disparve per lo foco,
come per l’acqua il pesce andando al fondo.

Io mi fei al mostrato innanzi un poco,
e dissi ch’al suo nome il mio disire
apparecchiava grazïoso loco.

El cominciò liberamente a dire:
“Tan m’abellis vostre cortes deman,
qu’ ieu no me puesc ni voill a vos cobrire.

Ieu sui Arnaut, que plor e vau cantan;
consiros vei la passada folor,
e vei jausen lo joi qu’ esper, denan.

Ara vos prec, per aquella valor
que vos guida al som de l’escalina,
sovenha vos a temps de ma dolor!”. 147

Poi s’ascose nel foco che li affina.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventisettesimo

Canto XXVII, dove tratta d'una visione che apparve a Dante in sogno, e come pervennero a la sommità del monte ed entraro nel Paradiso Terrestre chiamato paradiso delitiarum.

Sì come quando i primi raggi vibra
là dove il suo fattor lo sangue sparse,
cadendo Ibero sotto l'alta Libra,

e l'onde in Gange da nona rïarse,
sì stava il sole; onde 'l giorno sen giva,
come l'angel di Dio lieto ci apparse.

Fuor de la fiamma stava in su la riva,
e cantava 'Beati mundo corde!'
in voce assai più che la nostra viva.

Poscia "Più non si va, se pria non morde,
anime sante, il foco: intrate in esso,
e al cantar di là non siate sorde",

ci disse come noi li fummo presso;
per ch'io divenni tal, quando lo 'ntesi,
qual è colui che ne la fossa è messo.

In su le man commesse mi protesi,
guardando il foco e imaginando forte
umani corpi già veduti accesi.

Volsersi verso me le buone scorte;
e Virgilio mi disse: "Figliuol mio,
qui può esser tormento, ma non morte.

Ricorditi, ricorditi! E se io
sovresso Gerïon ti guidai salvo,
che farò ora presso più a Dio?

Credi per certo che se dentro a l’alvo
di questa fiamma stessi ben mille anni,
non ti potrebbe far d’un capel calvo.

E se tu forse credi ch’io t’inganni,
fatti ver’ lei, e fatti far credenza
con le tue mani al lembo d’i tuoi panni.

Pon giù omai, pon giù ogne temenza;
volgiti in qua e vieni: entra sicuro!”.
E io pur fermo e contra coscïenza.

Quando mi vide star pur fermo e duro,
turbato un poco disse: “Or vedi, figlio:
tra Bëatrice e te è questo muro”.

Come al nome di Tisbe aperse il ciglio
Piramo in su la morte, e riguardolla,
allor che ‘l gelso diventò vermiglio;

così, la mia durezza fatta solla,
mi volsi al savio duca, udendo il nome
che ne la mente sempre mi rampolla.

Ond’ei crollò la fronte e disse: “Come!
volenci star di qua?”; indi sorrise
come al fanciul si fa ch’è vinto al pome.

Poi dentro al foco innanzi mi si mise,
pregando Stazio che venisse retro,
che pria per lunga strada ci divise.

Sì com’ fui dentro, in un bogliente vetro
gittato mi sarei per rinfrescarmi,
tant’era ivi lo ‘ncendio sanza metro.

Lo dolce padre mio, per confortarmi,
pur di Beatrice ragionando andava,
dicendo: “Li occhi suoi già veder parmi”.

Guidavaci una voce che cantava
di là; e noi, attenti pur a lei,
venimmo fuor là ove si montava.

‘Venite, benedicti Patris mei’,
sonò dentro a un lume che lì era,
tal che mi vinse e guardar nol potei.

“Lo sol sen va”, soggiunse, “e vien la sera;
non v’arrestate, ma studiate il passo,
mentre che l’occidente non si annera”.

Dritta salia la via per entro ‘l sasso
verso tal parte ch’io toglieva i raggi
dinanzi a me del sol ch’era già basso.

E di pochi scaglion levammo i saggi,
che ‘l sol corcar, per l’ombra che si spense,
sentimmo dietro e io e li miei saggi.

E pria che ‘n tutte le sue parti immense
fosse orizzonte fatto d’uno aspetto,
e notte avesse tutte sue dispense,

ciascun di noi d’un grado fece letto;
ché la natura del monte ci affranse
la possa del salir più e ‘l diletto.

Quali si stanno ruminando manse
le capre, state rapide e proterve
sovra le cime avante che sien pranse,

tacite a l’ombra, mentre che ‘l sol ferve,
guardate dal pastor, che ‘n su la verga
poggiato s’è e lor di posa serve;

e quale il mandrïan che fori alberga,
lungo il pecuglio suo queto pernotta,
guardando perché fiera non lo sperga;

tali eravamo tutti e tre allotta,
io come capra, ed ei come pastori,
fasciati quinci e quindi d’alta grotta.

Poco parer potea lì del di fori;
ma, per quel poco, vedea io le stelle
di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori.

Sì ruminando e sì mirando in quelle,
mi prese il sonno; il sonno che sovente,
anzi che ‘l fatto sia, sa le novelle.

Ne l’ora, credo, che de l’orïente
prima raggiò nel monte Citerea,
che di foco d’amor par sempre ardente,

giovane e bella in sogno mi parea
donna vedere andar per una landa
cogliendo fiori; e cantando dicea:

“Sappia qualunque il mio nome dimanda
ch’i’ mi son Lia, e vo movendo intorno
le belle mani a farmi una ghirlanda.

Per piacermi a lo specchio, qui m’addorno;
ma mia suora Rachel mai non si smaga
dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto giorno.

Ell’è d’i suoi belli occhi veder vaga
com’io de l’addornarmi con le mani;
lei lo vedere, e me l’ovrare appaga”.

E già per li splendori antelucani,
che tanto a’ pellegrin surgon più grati,
quanto, tornando, albergan men lontani,

le tenebre fuggian da tutti lati,
e ‘l sonno mio con esse; ond’io leva’ mi,
veggendo i gran maestri già levati.

“Quel dolce pome che per tanti rami
cercando va la cura de’ mortali,
oggi porrà in pace le tue fami”.

Virgilio inverso me queste cotali
parole usò; e mai non furo strenne
che fosser di piacere a queste iguali.

Tanto voler sopra voler mi venne
de l’esser sù, ch’ad ogne passo poi
al volo mi sentia crescer le penne.

Come la scala tutta sotto noi
fu corsa e fummo in su ‘l grado superno,
in me ficcò Virgilio li occhi suoi,

e disse: “Il temporal foco e l’etterno
veduto hai, figlio; e se’ venuto in parte
dov’io per me più oltre non discerno.

Tratto t’ ho qui con ingegno e con arte;
lo tuo piacere omai prendi per duce;
fuor se’ de l’erte vie, fuor se’ de l’arte.

Vedi lo sol che ‘n fronte ti riluce;
vedi l’erbette, i fiori e li arbuscelli
che qui la terra sol da sé produce.

Mentre che vegnan lieti li occhi belli
che, lagrimando, a te venir mi fenno,
seder ti puoi e puoi andar tra elli.

Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno;
libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:

per ch’io te sovra te corono e mitrio”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventottesimo

Canto XXVIII, ove si tratta come la vita attiva distingue a l'auttore la natura del fiume di Letè, il quale trovò nel detto Paradiso, ove molto dimostra de la felicitade e del peccato di Adamo, e del modo e ordine del detto luogo.

Vago già di cercar dentro e dintorno
la divina foresta spessa e viva,
ch'a li occhi temperava il novo giorno,

sanza più aspettar, lasciai la riva,
prendendo la campagna lento lento
su per lo suol che d'ogne parte auliva.

Un'aura dolce, sanza mutamento
avere in sé, mi feria per la fronte
non di più colpo che soave vento;

per cui le fronde, tremolando, pronte
tutte quante piegavano a la parte
u' la prim'ombra gitta il santo monte;

non però dal loro esser dritto sparte
tanto, che li augelletti per le cime
lasciasser d'operare ogne lor arte;

ma con piena letizia l'ore prime,
cantando, ricevieno intra le foglie,
che tenevan bordone a le sue rime,

tal qual di ramo in ramo si raccoglie
per la pineta in su 'l lito di Chiassi,
quand'Ëolo scilocco fuor discioglie.

Già m'avean trasportato i lenti passi
dentro a la selva antica tanto, ch'io
non potea rivedere ond'io mi 'ntrassi;

ed ecco più andar mi tolse un rio,
che ‘nver’ sinistra con sue picciole onde
piegava l’erba che ‘n sua ripa uscìo. 27

Tutte l’acque che son di qua più monde,
parrieno avere in sé mistura alcuna
verso di quella, che nulla nasconde, 30

avvegna che si mova bruna bruna
sotto l’ombra perpetüa, che mai
raggiar non lascia sole ivi né luna. 33

Coi piè ristetti e con li occhi passai
di là dal fiumicello, per mirare
la gran varïazion d’i freschi mai; 36

e là m’apparve, sì com’elli appare
subitamente cosa che disvia
per maraviglia tutto altro pensare, 39

una donna soletta che si gia
e cantando e scegliendo fior da fiore
ond’era pinta tutta la sua via. 42

“Deh, bella donna, che a’ raggi d’amore
ti scaldi, s’i’ vo’ credere a’ sembianti
che soglion esser testimon del core, 45

vegnati in voglia di trarreti avanti”,
diss’io a lei, “verso questa rivera,
tanto ch’io possa intender che tu canti. 48

Tu mi fai rimembrar dove e qual era
Proserpina nel tempo che perdette
la madre lei, ed ella primavera”. 51

Come si volge, con le piante strette
a terra e intra sé, donna che balli,
e piede innanzi piede a pena mette, 54

volsesi in su i vermigli e in su i gialli
fioretti verso me, non altrimenti
che vergine che li occhi onesti avvalli;

e fece i prieghi miei esser contenti,
sì appressando sé, che ‘l dolce suono
veniva a me co’ suoi intendimenti.

Tosto che fu là dove l’erbe sono
bagnate già da l’onde del bel fiume,
di levar li occhi suoi mi fece dono.

Non credo che splendesse tanto lume
sotto le ciglia a Venere, trafitta
dal figlio fuor di tutto suo costume.

Ella ridea da l’altra riva dritta,
trattando più color con le sue mani,
che l’alta terra sanza seme gitta.

Tre passi ci facea il fiume lontani;
ma Elesponto, là ‘ve passò Serse,
ancora freno a tutti orgogli umani,

più odio da Leandro non sofferse
per mareggiare intra Sesto e Abido,
che quel da me perch’allor non s’aperse.

“Voi siete nuovi, e forse perch’io rido”,
cominciò ella, “in questo luogo eletto
a l’umana natura per suo nido,

maravigliando tienvi alcun sospetto;
ma luce rende il salmo Delectasti,
che puote disnebbiar vostro intelletto.

E tu che se’ dinanzi e mi pregasti,
dì s’altro vuoli udir; ch’i’ venni presta
ad ogne tua question tanto che basti”.

“L’acqua”, diss’io, “e ‘l suon de la foresta
impugnan dentro a me novella fede
di cosa ch’io udi’ contraria a questa”.

Ond’ella: “Io dicerò come procede
per sua cagion ciò ch’ammirar ti face,
e purgherò la nebbia che ti fiede.

Lo sommo ben, che solo esso a sé piace,
fé l’uom buono e a bene, e questo loco
diede per arr’a lui d’etterna pace.

Per sua difalta qui dimorò poco;
per sua difalta in pianto e in affanno
cambiò onesto riso e dolce gioco.

Perché ‘l turbar che sotto da sé fanno
l’essalazion de l’acqua e de la terra,
che quanto posson dietro al calor vanno,

a l’uomo non facesse alcuna guerra,
questo monte salìo verso ‘l ciel tanto,
e libero n’è d’indi ove si serra.

Or perché in circuito tutto quanto
l’aere si volge con la prima volta,
se non li è rotto il cerchio d’alcun canto,

in questa altezza ch’è tutta disciolta
ne l’aere vivo, tal moto percuote,
e fa sonar la selva perch’è folta;

e la percossa pianta tanto puote,
che de la sua virtute l’aura impregna
e quella poi, girando, intorno scuote;

e l’altra terra, secondo ch’è degna
per sé e per suo ciel, concepe e figlia
di diverse virtù diverse legna.

Non parrebbe di là poi maraviglia,
udito questo, quando alcuna pianta
sanza seme palese vi s’appiglia.

E saper dei che la campagna santa
dove tu se’, d’ogne semenza è piena,
e frutto ha in sé che di là non si schianta.

L’acqua che vedi non surge di vena
che ristori vapor che gel converta,
come fiume ch’acquista e perde lena;

ma esce di fontana salda e certa,
che tanto dal voler di Dio riprende,
quant’ella versa da due parti aperta.

Da questa parte con virtù discende
che toglie altrui memoria del peccato;
da l’altra d’ogne ben fatto la rende.

Quinci Letè; così da l’altro lato
Eünoè si chiama, e non adopra
se quinci e quindi pria non è gustato:

a tutti altri sapori esto è di sopra.
E avvegna ch’assai possa esser sazia
la sete tua perch’io più non ti scuopra,

darotti un corollario ancor per grazia;
né credo che ‘l mio dir ti sia men caro,
se oltre promession teco si spazia.

Quelli ch’anticamente poetaro
l’età de l’oro e suo stato felice,
forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.

Qui fu innocente l’umana radice;
qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto;
nettare è questo di che ciascun dice”.

Io mi rivolsi ‘n dietro allora tutto
a’ miei poeti, e vidi che con riso
udito avëan l’ultimo costrutto;

poi a la bella donna torna’ il viso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventinovesimo

Canto XXIX, dove si tratta sì come l'auttore contristato si conduole d'Eva e come vide li sette doni del Santo Spirito e Cristo e la celestiale corte in forma di certe figure.

Cantando come donna innamorata,
continüò col fin di sue parole:
'Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata!'.

E come ninfe che si givan sole
per le salvatiche ombre, disïando
qual di veder, qual di fuggir lo sole,

allor si mosse contra 'l fiume, andando
su per la riva; e io pari di lei,
picciol passo con picciol seguitando.

Non eran cento tra ' suoi passi e ' miei,
quando le ripe igualmente dier volta,
per modo ch'a levante mi rendei.

Né ancor fu così nostra via molta,
quando la donna tutta a me si torse,
dicendo: "Frate mio, guarda e ascolta".

Ed ecco un lustro sùbito trascorse
da tutte parti per la gran foresta,
tal che di balenar mi mise in forse.

Ma perché 'l balenar, come vien, resta,
e quel, durando, più e più splendeva,
nel mio pensier dicea: 'Che cosa è questa?'.

E una melodia dolce correva
per l'aere luminoso; onde buon zelo
mi fé riprender l'ardimento d'Eva,

che là dove ubidia la terra e ‘l cielo,
femmina, sola e pur testé formata,
non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo;

sotto ‘l qual se divota fosse stata,
avrei quelle ineffabili delizie
sentite prima e più lunga fïata.

Mentr’io m’andava tra tante primizie
de l’etterno piacer tutto sospeso,
e disïoso ancora a più letizie,

dinanzi a noi, tal quale un foco acceso,
ci si fé l’aere sotto i verdi rami;
e ‘l dolce suon per canti era già inteso.

O sacrosante Vergini, se fami,
freddi o vigilie mai per voi soffersi,
cagion mi sprona ch’io mercé vi chiami.

Or convien che Elicona per me versi,
e Uranìe m’aiuti col suo coro
forti cose a pensar mettere in versi.

Poco più oltre, sette alberi d’oro
falsava nel parere il lungo tratto
del mezzo ch’era ancor tra noi e loro;

ma quand’i’ fui sì presso di lor fatto,
che l’obietto comun, che ‘l senso inganna,
non perdea per distanza alcun suo atto,

la virtù ch’a ragion discorso ammanna,
sì com’elli eran candelabri apprese,
e ne le voci del cantare ‘Osanna’.

Di sopra fiammeggiava il bello arnese
più chiaro assai che luna per sereno
di mezza notte nel suo mezzo mese.

Io mi rivolsi d’ammirazion pieno
al buon Virgilio, ed esso mi rispuose
con vista carca di stupor non meno.

Indi rendei l’aspetto a l’alte cose
che si movieno incontr’a noi sì tardi,
che foran vinte da novelle spose.

La donna mi sgridò: “Perché pur ardi
sì ne l’affetto de le vive luci,
e ciò che vien di retro a lor non guardi?”.

Genti vid’io allor, come a lor duci,
venire appresso, vestite di bianco;
e tal candor di qua già mai non fuci.

L’acqua imprendëa dal sinistro fianco,
e rendea me la mia sinistra costa,
s’io riguardava in lei, come specchio anco.

Quand’io da la mia riva ebbi tal posta,
che solo il fiume mi facea distante,
per veder meglio ai passi diedi sosta,

e vidi le fiammelle andar davante,
lasciando dietro a sé l’aere dipinto,
e di tratti pennelli avean sembiante;

sì che lì sopra rimanea distinto
di sette liste, tutte in quei colori
onde fa l’arco il Sole e Delia il cinto.

Questi ostendali in dietro eran maggiori
che la mia vista; e, quanto a mio avviso,
diece passi distavan quei di fori.

Sotto così bel ciel com’io diviso,
ventiquattro seniori, a due a due,
coronati venien di fiordaliso.

Tutti cantavan: “Benedicta tue
ne le figlie d’Adamo, e benedette
sieno in etterno le bellezze tue!”. 87

Poscia che i fiori e l’altre fresche erbette
a rimpetto di me da l’altra sponda
libere fuor da quelle genti elette, 90

sì come luce luce in ciel seconda,
vennero appresso lor quattro animali,
coronati ciascun di verde fronda. 93

Ognuno era pennuto di sei ali;
le penne piene d’occhi; e li occhi d’Argo,
se fosser vivi, sarebber cotali. 96

A descriver lor forme più non spargo
rime, lettor; ch’altra spesa mi strigne,
tanto ch’a questa non posso esser largo; 99

ma leggi Ezechïel, che li dipigne
come li vide da la fredda parte
venir con vento e con nube e con igne; 102

e quali i troverai ne le sue carte,
tali eran quivi, salvo ch’a le penne
Giovanni è meco e da lui si diparte. 105

Lo spazio dentro a lor quattro contenne
un carro, in su due rote, trïunfale,
ch’al collo d’un grifon tirato venne. 108

Esso tendeva in sù l’una e l’altra ale
tra la mezzana e le tre e tre liste,
sì ch’a nulla, fendendo, facea male. 111

Tanto salivan che non eran viste;
le membra d’oro avea quant’era uccello,
e bianche l’altre, di vermiglio miste. 114

Non che Roma di carro così bello
rallegrasse Affricano, o vero Augusto,
ma quel del Sol saria pover con ello;

quel del Sol che, svïando, fu combusto
per l'orazion de la Terra devota,
quando fu Giove arcanamente giusto.

Tre donne in giro da la destra rota
venian danzando; l'una tanto rossa
ch'a pena fora dentro al foco nota;

l'altr'era come se le carni e l'ossa
fossero state di smeraldo fatte;
la terza parea neve testé mossa;

e or parëan da la bianca tratte,
or da la rossa; e dal canto di questa
l'altre toglien l'andare e tarde e ratte.

Da la sinistra quattro facean festa,
in porpore vestite, dietro al modo
d'una di lor ch'avea tre occhi in testa.

Appresso tutto il pertrattato nodo
vidi due vecchi in abito dispari,
ma pari in atto e onesto e sodo.

L'un si mostrava alcun de' famigliari
di quel sommo Ipocràte che natura
a li animali fé ch'ell' ha più cari;

mostrava l'altro la contraria cura
con una spada lucida e aguta,
tal che di qua dal rio mi fé paura.

Poi vidi quattro in umile paruta;
e di retro da tutti un vecchio solo
venir, dormendo, con la faccia arguta.

E questi sette col primaio stuolo
erano abitüati, ma di gigli
dintorno al capo non facëan brolo,

anzi di rose e d’altri fior vermigli;
giurato avria poco lontano aspetto
che tutti ardesser di sopra da’ cigli.

E quando il carro a me fu a rimpetto,
un tuon s’udì, e quelle genti degne
parvero aver l’andar più interdetto,

fermandosi ivi con le prime insegne.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentesimo

Canto XXX, dove narra come Beatrice apparve a Dante e Virgilio il lasciò, e lo recitare per l'alta donna de la incostanza e difetto di Dante, e qui l'auttore piange i suoi difetti con vergogna compuntiva.

Quando il settentrïon del primo cielo,
che né occaso mai seppe né orto
né d'altra nebbia che di colpa velo,

e che faceva lì ciascuno accorto
di suo dover, come 'l più basso face
qual temon gira per venire a porto,

fermo s'affisse: la gente verace,
venuta prima tra 'l grifone ed esso,
al carro volse sé come a sua pace;

e un di loro, quasi da ciel messo,
'Veni, sponsa, de Libano' cantando
gridò tre volte, e tutti li altri appresso.

Quali i beati al novissimo bando
surgeran presti ognun di sua caverna,
la revestita voce alleluiando,

cotali in su la divina basterna
si levar cento, ad vocem tanti senis,
ministri e messagger di vita etterna.

Tutti dicean: 'Benedictus qui venis!',
e fior gittando e di sopra e dintorno,
'Manibus, oh, date lilïa plenis!'.

Io vidi già nel cominciar del giorno
la parte orïental tutta rosata,
e l'altro ciel di bel sereno addorno;

e la faccia del sol nascere ombrata,
sì che per temperanza di vapori
l’occhio la sostenea lunga fïata:

così dentro una nuvola di fiori
che da le mani angeliche saliva
e ricadeva in giù dentro e di fori,

sovra candido vel cinta d’uliva
donna m’apparve, sotto verde manto
vestita di color di fiamma viva.

E lo spirito mio, che già cotanto
tempo era stato ch’a la sua presenza
non era di stupor, tremando, affranto,

sanza de li occhi aver più conoscenza,
per occulta virtù che da lei mosse,
d’antico amor sentì la gran potenza.

Tosto che ne la vista mi percosse
l’alta virtù che già m’avea trafitto
prima ch’io fuor di püerizia fosse,

volsimi a la sinistra col respitto
col quale il fantolin corre a la mamma
quando ha paura o quando elli è afflitto,

per dicere a Virgilio: ‘Men che dramma
di sangue m’è rimaso che non tremi:
conosco i segni de l’antica fiamma’.

Ma Virgilio n’avea lasciati scemi
di sé, Virgilio dolcissimo patre,
Virgilio a cui per mia salute die’ mi;

né quantunque perdeo l’antica matre,
valse a le guance nette di rugiada
che, lagrimando, non tornasser atre.

“Dante, perché Virgilio se ne vada,
non pianger anco, non piangere ancora;
ché pianger ti conven per altra spada”.

Quasi ammiraglio che in poppa e in prora
viene a veder la gente che ministra
per li altri legni, e a ben far l’incora;

in su la sponda del carro sinistra,
quando mi volsi al suon del nome mio,
che di necessità qui si registra,

vidi la donna che pria m’appario
velata sotto l’angelica festa,
drizzar li occhi ver’ me di qua dal rio.

Tutto che ‘l vel che le scendea di testa,
cerchiato de le fronde di Minerva,
non la lasciasse parer manifesta,

regalmente ne l’atto ancor proterva
continüò come colui che dice
e ‘l più caldo parlar dietro reserva:

“Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice.
Come degnasti d’accedere al monte?
non sapei tu che qui è l’uom felice?”.

Li occhi mi cadder giù nel chiaro fonte;
ma veggendomi in esso, i trassi a l’erba,
tanta vergogna mi gravò la fronte.

Così la madre al figlio par superba,
com’ella parve a me; perché d’amaro
sente il sapor de la pietade acerba.

Ella si tacque; e li angeli cantaro
di sùbito ‘In te, Domine, speravi’;
ma oltre ‘pedes meos’ non passaro.

Sì come neve tra le vive travi
per lo dosso d’Italia si congela,
soffiata e stretta da li venti schiavi,

poi, liquefatta, in sé stessa trapela,
pur che la terra che perde ombra spiri,
sì che par foco fonder la candela;

così fui sanza lagrime e sospiri
anzi ‘l cantar di quei che notan sempre
dietro a le note de li etterni giri;

ma poi che ‘ntesi ne le dolci tempre
lor compartire a me, par che se detto
avesser: ‘Donna, perché sì lo stempre?’,

lo gel che m’era intorno al cor ristretto,
spirito e acqua fessi, e con angoscia
de la bocca e de li occhi uscì del petto.

Ella, pur ferma in su la detta coscia
del carro stando, a le sustanze pie
volse le sue parole così poscia:

“Voi vigilate ne l’etterno die,
sì che notte né sonno a voi non fura
passo che faccia il secol per sue vie;

onde la mia risposta è con più cura
che m’intenda colui che di là piagne,
perché sia colpa e duol d’una misura.

Non pur per ovra de le rote magne,
che drizzan ciascun seme ad alcun fine
secondo che le stelle son compagne,

ma per larghezza di grazie divine,
che sì alti vapori hanno a lor piova,
che nostre viste là non van vicine,

questi fu tal ne la sua vita nova
virtüalmente, ch'ogne abito destro
fatto averebbe in lui mirabil prova.

Ma tanto più maligno e più silvestro
si fa 'l terren col mal seme e non cólto,
quant'elli ha più di buon vigor terrestro.

Alcun tempo il sostenni col mio volto:
mostrando li occhi giovanetti a lui,
meco il menava in dritta parte vòlto.

Sì tosto come in su la soglia fui
di mia seconda etade e mutai vita,
questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui.

Quando di carne a spirto era salita,
e bellezza e virtù cresciuta m'era,
fu' io a lui men cara e men gradita;

e volse i passi suoi per via non vera,
imagini di ben seguendo false,
che nulla promession rendono intera.

Né l'impetrare ispirazion mi valse,
con le quali e in sogno e altrimenti
lo rivocai: sì poco a lui ne calse!

Tanto giù cadde, che tutti argomenti
a la salute sua eran già corti,
fuor che mostrarli le perdute genti.

Per questo visitai l'uscio d'i morti,
e a colui che l' ha qua sù condotto,
li preghi miei, piangendo, furon porti.

Alto fato di Dio sarebbe rotto,
se Letè si passasse e tal vivanda
fosse gustata sanza alcuno scotto

di pentimento che lagrime spanda”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentunesimo

Canto XXXI, ove si tratta sì come Beatrice riprende l'auttore de le commesse colpe, e come la donna che avante li apparve il bagna.

"O tu che se' di là dal fiume sacro",
volgendo suo parlare a me per punta,
che pur per taglio m'era paruto acro,

ricominciò, seguendo sanza cunta,
"dì, dì se questo è vero; a tanta accusa
tua confession conviene esser congiunta".

Era la mia virtù tanto confusa,
che la voce si mosse, e pria si spense
che da li organi suoi fosse dischiusa.

Poco sofferse; poi disse: "Che pense?
Rispondi a me; ché le memorie triste
in te non sono ancor da l'acqua offense".

Confusione e paura insieme miste
mi pinsero un tal "sì" fuor de la bocca,
al quale intender fuor mestier le viste.

Come balestro frange, quando scocca
da troppa tesa, la sua corda e l'arco,
e con men foga l'asta il segno tocca,

sì scoppia' io sottesso grave carco,
fuori sgorgando lagrime e sospiri,
e la voce allentò per lo suo varco.

Ond'ella a me: "Per entro i mie' disiri,
che ti menavano ad amar lo bene
di là dal qual non è a che s'aspiri,

quai fossi attraversati o quai catene
trovasti, per che del passare innanzi

dovessiti così spogliar la spene? 27

E quali agevolezze o quali avanzi
ne la fronte de li altri si mostraro,
per che dovessi lor passeggiare anzi?”. 30

Dopo la tratta d’un sospiro amaro,
a pena ebbi la voce che rispuose,
e le labbra a fatica la formaro. 33

Piangendo dissi: “Le presenti cose
col falso lor piacer volser miei passi,
tosto che ‘l vostro viso si nascose”. 36

Ed ella: “Se tacessi o se negassi
ciò che confessi, non fora men nota
la colpa tua: da tal giudice sassi! 39

Ma quando scoppia de la propria gota
l’accusa del peccato, in nostra corte
rivolge sé contra ‘l taglio la rota. 42

Tuttavia, perché mo vergogna porte
del tuo errore, e perché altra volta,
udendo le serene, sie più forte, 45

pon giù il seme del piangere e ascolta:
sì udirai come in contraria parte
mover dovieti mia carne sepolta. 48

Mai non t’appresentò natura o arte
piacer, quanto le belle membra in ch’io
rinchiusa fui, e che so’ ‘n terra sparte; 51

e se ‘l sommo piacer sì ti fallio
per la mia morte, qual cosa mortale
dovea poi trarre te nel suo disio? 54

Ben ti dovevi, per lo primo strale
de le cose fallaci, levar suso

di retro a me che non era più tale.

Non ti dovea gravar le penne in giuso,
ad aspettar più colpo, o pargoletta
o altra novità con sì breve uso.

Novo augelletto due o tre aspetta;
ma dinanzi da li occhi d'i pennuti
rete si spiega indarno o si saetta".

Quali fanciulli, vergognando, muti
con li occhi a terra stannosi, ascoltando
e sé riconoscendo e ripentuti,

tal mi stav'io; ed ella disse: "Quando
per udir se' dolente, alza la barba,
e prenderai più doglia riguardando".

Con men di resistenza si dibarba
robusto cerro, o vero al nostral vento
o vero a quel de la terra di Iarba,

ch'io non levai al suo comando il mento;
e quando per la barba il viso chiese,
ben conobbi il velen de l'argomento.

E come la mia faccia si distese,
posarsi quelle prime creature
da loro aspersïon l'occhio comprese;

e le mie luci, ancor poco sicure,
vider Beatrice volta in su la fiera
ch'è sola una persona in due nature.

Sotto 'l suo velo e oltre la rivera
vincer pariemi più sé stessa antica,
vincer che l'altre qui, quand'ella c'era.

Di penter sì mi punse ivi l'ortica,
che di tutte altre cose qual mi torse

più nel suo amor, più mi si fé nemica.

Tanta riconoscenza il cor mi morse,
ch’io caddi vinto; e quale allora femmi,
salsi colei che la cagion mi porse.

Poi, quando il cor virtù di fuor rendemmi,
la donna ch’io avea trovata sola
sopra me vidi, e dicea: “Tiemmi, tiemmi!”.

Tratto m’avea nel fiume infin la gola,
e tirandosi me dietro sen giva
sovresso l’acqua lieve come scola.

Quando fui presso a la beata riva,
‘Asperges me’ sì dolcemente udissi,
che nol so rimembrar, non ch’io lo scriva.

La bella donna ne le braccia aprissi;
abbracciommi la testa e mi sommerse
ove convenne ch’io l’acqua inghiottissi.

Indi mi tolse, e bagnato m’offerse
dentro a la danza de le quattro belle;
e ciascuna del braccio mi coperse.

“Noi siam qui ninfe e nel ciel siamo stelle;
pria che Beatrice discendesse al mondo,
fummo ordinate a lei per sue ancelle.

Merrenti a li occhi suoi; ma nel giocondo
lume ch’è dentro aguzzeranno i tuoi
le tre di là, che miran più profondo”.

Così cantando cominciaro; e poi
al petto del grifon seco menarmi,
ove Beatrice stava volta a noi.

Disser: “Fa che le viste non risparmi;
posto t’avem dinanzi a li smeraldi

ond’Amor già ti trasse le sue armi”.

Mille disiri più che fiamma caldi
strinsermi li occhi a li occhi rilucenti,
che pur sopra ‘l grifone stavan saldi.

Come in lo specchio il sol, non altrimenti
la doppia fiera dentro vi raggiava,
or con altri, or con altri reggimenti.

Pensa, lettor, s’io mi maravigliava,
quando vedea la cosa in sé star queta,
e ne l’idolo suo si trasmutava.

Mentre che piena di stupore e lieta
l’anima mia gustava di quel cibo
che, saziando di sé, di sé asseta,

sé dimostrando di più alto tribo
ne li atti, l’altre tre si fero avanti,
danzando al loro angelico caribo.

“Volgi, Beatrice, volgi li occhi santi”,
era la sua canzone, “al tuo fedele
che, per vederti, ha mossi passi tanti!

Per grazia fa noi grazia che disvele
a lui la bocca tua, sì che discerna
la seconda bellezza che tu cele”.

O isplendor di viva luce etterna,
chi palido si fece sotto l’ombra
sì di Parnaso, o bevve in sua cisterna,

che non paresse aver la mente ingombra,
tentando a render te qual tu paresti
là dove armonizzando il ciel t’adombra,

quando ne l’aere aperto ti solvesti?

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentaduesimo

Canto XXXII, dove si tratta come Beatrice comandò a l'auttore che scrivesse li miracoli che vide in quel luogo, e come elli con le donne seguio il carro, e l'aguglia percosse il carro, e una volpe sen fuggio, e de la puttana e del gigante.

Tant'eran li occhi miei fissi e attenti
a disbramarsi la decenne sete,
che li altri sensi m'eran tutti spenti.

Ed essi quinci e quindi avien parete
di non caler - così lo santo riso
a sé traéli con l'antica rete! -;

quando per forza mi fu vòlto il viso
ver' la sinistra mia da quelle dee,
perch'io udi' da loro un "Troppo fiso!";

e la disposizion ch'a veder èe
ne li occhi pur testé dal sol percossi,
sanza la vista alquanto esser mi fée.

Ma poi ch'al poco il viso riformossi
(e dico 'al poco' per rispetto al molto
sensibile onde a forza mi rimossi),

vidi 'n sul braccio destro esser rivolto
lo glorïoso essercito, e tornarsi
col sole e con le sette fiamme al volto.

Come sotto li scudi per salvarsi
volgesi schiera, e sé gira col segno,
prima che possa tutta in sé mutarsi;

quella milizia del celeste regno
che procedeva, tutta trapassonne
pria che piegasse il carro il primo legno.

Indi a le rote si tornar le donne,
e ‘l grifon mosse il benedetto carco
sì, che però nulla penna crollonne. 27

La bella donna che mi trasse al varco
e Stazio e io seguitavam la rota
che fé l’orbita sua con minore arco. 30

Sì passeggiando l’alta selva vòta,
colpa di quella ch’al serpente crese,
temprava i passi un’angelica nota. 33

Forse in tre voli tanto spazio prese
disfrenata saetta, quanto eramo
rimossi, quando Bëatrice scese. 36

Io senti’ mormorare a tutti “Adamo”;
poi cerchiaro una pianta dispogliata
di foglie e d’altra fronda in ciascun ramo. 39

La coma sua, che tanto si dilata
più quanto più è sù, fora da l’Indi
ne’ boschi lor per altezza ammirata. 42

“Beato se’, grifon, che non discindi
col becco d’esto legno dolce al gusto,
poscia che mal si torce il ventre quindi”. 45

Così dintorno a l’albero robusto
gridaron li altri; e l’animal binato:
“Sì si conserva il seme d’ogne giusto”. 48

E vòlto al temo ch’elli avea tirato,
trasselo al piè de la vedova frasca,
e quel di lei a lei lasciò legato. 51

Come le nostre piante, quando casca
giù la gran luce mischiata con quella
che raggia dietro a la celeste lasca, 54

turgide fansi, e poi si rinovella
di suo color ciascuna, pria che ‘l sole
giunga li suoi corsier sotto altra stella;

men che di rose e più che di vïole
colore aprendo, s’innovò la pianta,
che prima avea le ramora sì sole.

Io non lo ‘ntesi, né qui non si canta
l’inno che quella gente allor cantaro,
né la nota soffersi tutta quanta.

S’io potessi ritrar come assonnaro
li occhi spietati udendo di Siringa,
li occhi a cui pur vegghiar costò sì caro;

come pintor che con essempro pinga,
disegnerei com’io m’addormentai;
ma qual vuol sia che l’assonnar ben finga.

Però trascorro a quando mi svegliai,
e dico ch’un splendor mi squarciò ‘l velo
del sonno, e un chiamar: “Surgi: che fai?”.

Quali a veder de’ fioretti del melo
che del suo pome li angeli fa ghiotti
e perpetüe nozze fa nel cielo,

Pietro e Giovanni e Iacopo condotti
e vinti, ritornaro a la parola
da la qual furon maggior sonni rotti,

e videro scemata loro scuola
così di Moïsè come d’Elia,
e al maestro suo cangiata stola;

tal torna’ io, e vidi quella pia
sovra me starsi che conducitrice
fu de’ miei passi lungo ‘l fiume pria.

E tutto in dubbio dissi: “Ov’è Beatrice?”.
Ond’ella: “Vedi lei sotto la fronda
nova sedere in su la sua radice.

Vedi la compagnia che la circonda:
li altri dopo ‘l grifon sen vanno suso
con più dolce canzone e più profonda”.

E se più fu lo suo parlar diffuso,
non so, però che già ne li occhi m’era
quella ch’ad altro intender m’avea chiuso.

Sola sedeasi in su la terra vera,
come guardia lasciata lì del plaustro
che legar vidi a la biforme fera.

In cerchio le facevan di sé claustro
le sette ninfe, con quei lumi in mano
che son sicuri d’Aquilone e d’Austro.

“Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano;
e sarai meco sanza fine cive
di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano.

Però, in pro del mondo che mal vive,
al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,
ritornato di là, fa che tu scrive”.

Così Beatrice; e io, che tutto ai piedi
d’i suoi comandamenti era divoto,
la mente e li occhi ov’ella volle diedi.

Non scese mai con sì veloce moto
foco di spessa nube, quando piove
da quel confine che più va remoto,

com’io vidi calar l’uccel di Giove
per l’alber giù, rompendo de la scorza,
non che d’i fiori e de le foglie nove;

e ferì ‘l carro di tutta sua forza;
ond’el piegò come nave in fortuna,
vinta da l’onda, or da poggia, or da orza.

Poscia vidi avventarsi ne la cuna
del trïunfal veiculo una volpe
che d’ogne pasto buon parea digiuna;

ma, riprendendo lei di laide colpe,
la donna mia la volse in tanta futa
quanto sofferser l’ossa sanza polpe.

Poscia per indi ond’era pria venuta,
l’aguglia vidi scender giù ne l’arca
del carro e lasciar lei di sé pennuta;

e qual esce di cuor che si rammarca,
tal voce uscì del cielo e cotal disse:
“O navicella mia, com’ mal se’ carca!”.

Poi parve a me che la terra s’aprisse
tr’ambo le ruote, e vidi uscirne un drago
che per lo carro sù la coda fisse;

e come vespa che ritragge l’ago,
a sé traendo la coda maligna,
trasse del fondo, e gissen vago vago.

Quel che rimase, come da gramigna
vivace terra, da la piuma, offerta
forse con intenzion sana e benigna,

si ricoperse, e funne ricoperta
e l’una e l’altra rota e ‘l temo, in tanto
che più tiene un sospir la bocca aperta.

Trasformato così ‘l dificio santo
mise fuor teste per le parti sue,
tre sovra ‘l temo e una in ciascun canto.

Le prime eran cornute come bue,
ma le quattro un sol corno avean per fronte:
simile mostro visto ancor non fue.

Sicura, quasi rocca in alto monte,
seder sovresso una puttana sciolta
m’apparve con le ciglia intorno pronte;

e come perché non li fosse tolta,
vidi di costa a lei dritto un gigante;
e basciavansi insieme alcuna volta.

Ma perché l’occhio cupido e vagante
a me rivolse, quel feroce drudo
la flagellò dal capo infin le piante;

poi, di sospetto pieno e d’ira crudo,
disciolse il mostro, e trassel per la selva,
tanto che sol di lei mi fece scudo

a la puttana e a la nova belva.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentatreesimo

Canto XXXIII, il quale si è l'ultimo de la seconda cantica, ove si racconta sì come Beatrice dichiaroe a Dante quelle cose ch'elli vide, trattando e dimostrando le future vendette e de la ingiuria nel predetto carro del grifone; e infine, veduti li quattro fiumi del Paradiso, escono verso il cielo.

'Deus, venerunt gentes', alternando
or tre or quattro dolce salmodia,
le donne incominciaro, e lagrimando;

e Bëatrice, sospirosa e pia,
quelle ascoltava sì fatta, che poco
più a la croce si cambiò Maria.

Ma poi che l'altre vergini dier loco
a lei di dir, levata dritta in pè,
rispuose, colorata come foco:

'Modicum, et non videbitis me;
et iterum, sorelle mie dilette,
modicum, et vos videbitis me'.

Poi le si mise innanzi tutte e sette,
e dopo sé, solo accennando, mosse
me e la donna e 'l savio che ristette.

Così sen giva; e non credo che fosse
lo decimo suo passo in terra posto,
quando con li occhi li occhi mi percosse;

e con tranquillo aspetto "Vien più tosto",
mi disse, "tanto che, s'io parlo teco,
ad ascoltarmi tu sie ben disposto".

Sì com'io fui, com'io dovëa, seco,
dissemi: "Frate, perché non t'attenti
a domandarmi omai venendo meco?".

Come a color che troppo reverenti
dinanzi a suo maggior parlando sono,
che non traggon la voce viva ai denti,

avvenne a me, che sanza intero suono
incominciai: “Madonna, mia bisogna
voi conoscete, e ciò ch’ad essa è buono”.

Ed ella a me: “Da tema e da vergogna
voglio che tu omai ti disviluppe,
sì che non parli più com’om che sogna.

Sappi che ‘l vaso che ‘l serpente ruppe,
fu e non è; ma chi n’ ha colpa, creda
che vendetta di Dio non teme suppe.

Non sarà tutto tempo sanza reda
l’aguglia che lasciò le penne al carro,
per che divenne mostro e poscia preda;

ch’io veggio certamente, e però il narro,
a darne tempo già stelle propinque,
secure d’ogn’intoppo e d’ogne sbarro,

nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque,
messo di Dio, anciderà la fuia
con quel gigante che con lei delinque.

E forse che la mia narrazion buia,
qual Temi e Sfinge, men ti persuade,
perch’a lor modo lo ‘ntelletto attuia;

ma tosto fier li fatti le Naiade,
che solveranno questo enigma forte
sanza danno di pecore o di biade.

Tu nota; e sì come da me son porte,
così queste parole segna a’ vivi
del viver ch’è un correre a la morte.

E aggi a mente, quando tu le scrivi,
di non celar qual hai vista la pianta
ch’è or due volte dirubata quivi.

Qualunque ruba quella o quella schianta,
con bestemmia di fatto offende a Dio,
che solo a l’uso suo la creò santa.

Per morder quella, in pena e in disio
cinquemilia anni e più l’anima prima
bramò colui che ‘l morso in sé punio.

Dorme lo ‘ngegno tuo, se non estima
per singular cagione essere eccelsa
lei tanto e sì travolta ne la cima.

E se stati non fossero acqua d’Elsa
li pensier vani intorno a la tua mente,
e ‘l piacer loro un Piramo a la gelsa,

per tante circostanze solamente
la giustizia di Dio, ne l’interdetto,
conosceresti a l’arbor moralmente.

Ma perch’io veggio te ne lo ‘ntelletto
fatto di pietra e, impetrato, tinto,
sì che t’abbaglia il lume del mio detto,

voglio anco, e se non scritto, almen dipinto,
che ‘l te ne porti dentro a te per quello
che si reca il bordon di palma cinto”.

E io: “Sì come cera da suggello,
che la figura impressa non trasmuta,
segnato è or da voi lo mio cervello.

Ma perché tanto sovra mia veduta
vostra parola disïata vola,
che più la perde quanto più s’aiuta?”.

“Perché conoschi”, disse, “quella scuola
c’ hai seguitata, e veggi sua dottrina
come può seguitar la mia parola;

e veggi vostra via da la divina
distar cotanto, quanto si discorda
da terra il ciel che più alto festina”.

Ond’io rispuosi lei: “Non mi ricorda
ch’i’ stranïasse me già mai da voi,
né honne coscïenza che rimorda”.

“E se tu ricordar non te ne puoi”,
sorridendo rispuose, “or ti rammenta
come bevesti di Letè ancoi;

e se dal fummo foco s’argomenta,
cotesta oblivïon chiaro conchiude
colpa ne la tua voglia altrove attenta.

Veramente oramai saranno nude
le mie parole, quanto converrassi
quelle scovrire a la tua vista rude”.

E più corusco e con più lenti passi
teneva il sole il cerchio di merigge,
che qua e là, come li aspetti, fassi,

quando s’affisser, sì come s’affigge
chi va dinanzi a gente per iscorta
se trova novitate o sue vestigge,

le sette donne al fin d’un’ombra smorta,
qual sotto foglie verdi e rami nigri
sovra suoi freddi rivi l’alpe porta.

Dinanzi ad esse Ëufratès e Tigri
veder mi parve uscir d’una fontana,
e, quasi amici, dipartirsi pigri.

“O luce, o gloria de la gente umana,
che acqua è questa che qui si dispiega
da un principio e sé da sé lontana?”.

Per cotal priego detto mi fu: “Priega
Matelda che ‘l ti dica”. E qui rispuose,
come fa chi da colpa si dislega,

la bella donna: “Questo e altre cose
dette li son per me; e son sicura
che l’acqua di Letè non gliel nascose”.

E Bëatrice: “Forse maggior cura,
che spesse volte la memoria priva,
fatt’ ha la mente sua ne li occhi oscura.

Ma vedi Eünoè che là diriva:
menalo ad esso, e come tu se’ usa,
la tramortita sua virtù ravviva”.

Come anima gentil, che non fa scusa,
ma fa sua voglia de la voglia altrui
tosto che è per segno fuor dischiusa;

così, poi che da essa preso fui,
la bella donna mossesi, e a Stazio
donnescamente disse: “Vien con lui”.

S’io avessi, lettor, più lungo spazio
da scrivere, i’ pur cantere’ in parte
lo dolce ber che mai non m’avria sazio;

ma perché piene son tutte le carte
ordite a questa cantica seconda,
non mi lascia più ir lo fren de l’arte.

Io ritornai da la santissima onda
rifatto sì come piante novelle
rinovellate di novella fronda,

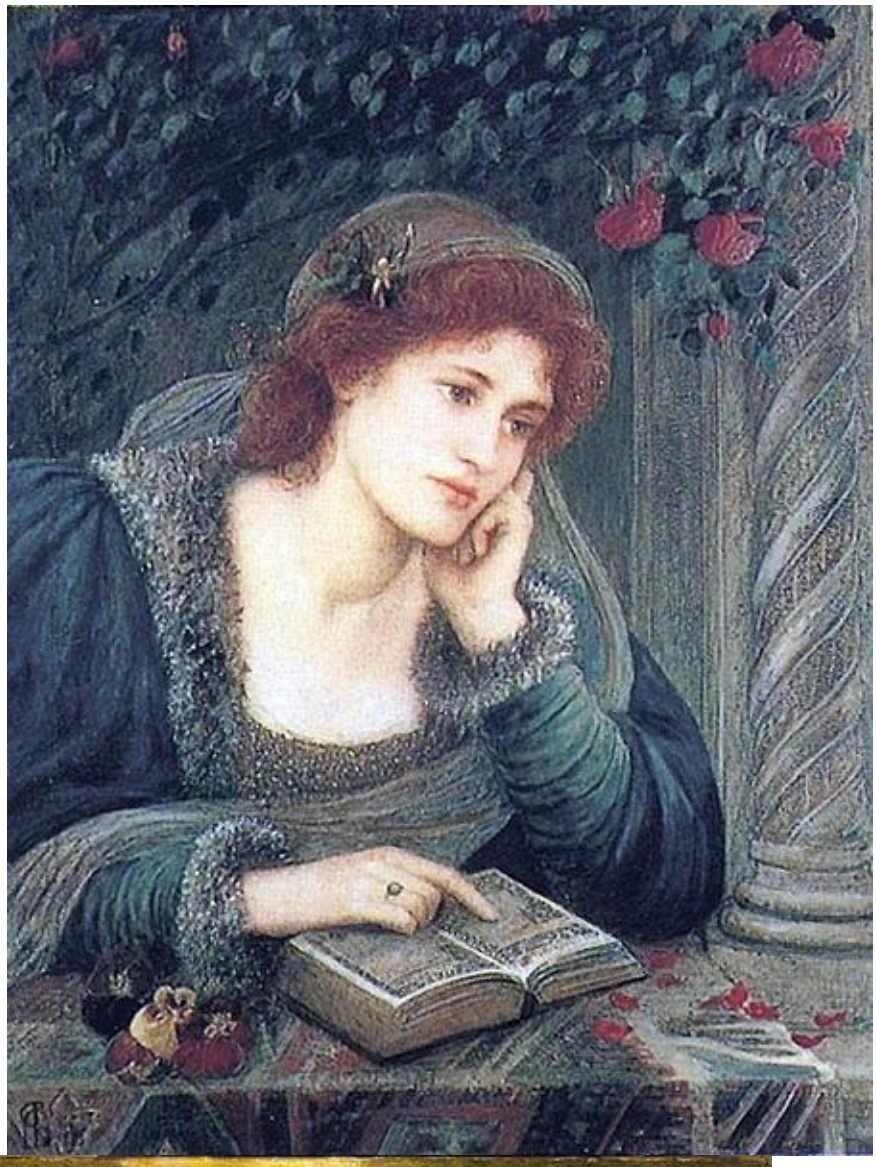
puro e disposto a salire a le stelle.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

PARADISO

Libero da tutti i peccati, adesso Dante può ascendere al Paradiso e, accanto a Beatrice, vi accede volando ad altissima velocità. Il Paradiso è composto da nove cerchi concentrici, al cui centro sta la Terra; in ognuno di questi cieli, dove risiede un pianeta diverso, stanno i beati, più vicini a Dio a seconda del loro grado di beatitudine. Ma le anime del Paradiso non stanno meglio o peggio, e nessuno desidera una condizione migliore di quella che ha, poiché la carità non permette di desiderare altro se non quello che si ha; Dio, al momento della nascita, ha donato secondo criteri inconoscibili ad ogni anima una certa quantità di grazia, ed è in proporzione a questa che essi godono diversi livelli di beatitudine. Prima di raggiungere il primo cielo i due attraversano la Sfera di Fuoco.

Per l'indice, clicca qui



Canto Primo

Comincia la terza cantica de la Commedia di Dante Alaghieri di Fiorenza, ne la quale si tratta de' beati e de la celestiale gloria e de' meriti e premi de' santi, e dividesi in nove parti. Canto primo, nel cui principio l'auttore proemizza a la seguente cantica; e sono ne lo elemento del fuoco e Beatrice solve a l'auttore una questione; nel quale canto l'auttore promette di trattare de le cose divine invocando la scienza poetica, cioè Appollo chiamato il deo de la Sapienza.

La gloria di colui che tutto move
per l'universo penetra, e risplende
in una parte più e meno altrove.

Nel ciel che più de la sua luce prende
fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
né sa né può chi di là sù discende;

perché appressando sé al suo disire,
nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
che dietro la memoria non può ire.

Veramente quant'io del regno santo
ne la mia mente potei far tesoro,
sarà ora materia del mio canto.

O buono Appollo, a l'ultimo lavoro
fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso,

come dimandi a dar l’amato alloro. 15

Infino a qui l’un giogo di Parnaso
assai mi fu; ma or con amendue
m’è uopo intrar ne l’aringo rimaso. 18

Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue
sì come quando Marsïa traesti
de la vagina de le membra sue. 21

O divina virtù, se mi ti presti
tanto che l’ombra del beato regno
segnata nel mio capo io manifesti, 24

vedra’ mi al piè del tuo diletto legno
venire, e coronarmi de le foglie
che la materia e tu mi farai degno. 27

Sì rade volte, padre, se ne coglie
per trïunfare o cesare o poeta,
colpa e vergogna de l’umane voglie, 30

che parturir letizia in su la lieta
delfica deïtà dovria la fronda
peneia, quando alcun di sé asseta. 33

Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda:
forse di retro a me con miglior voci
si pregherà perché Cirra risponda. 36

Surge ai mortali per diverse foci
la lucerna del mondo; ma da quella
che quattro cerchi giugne con tre croci, 39

con miglior corso e con migliore stella
esce congiunta, e la mondana cera
più a suo modo tempera e suggella. 42

Fatto avea di là mane e di qua sera
tal foce, e quasi tutto era là bianco

quello emisperio, e l’altra parte nera,

quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco
vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole:
aguglia sì non li s’affisse unquanco.

E sì come secondo raggio suole
uscir del primo e risalire in suso,
pur come pelegrin che tornar vuole,

così de l’atto suo, per li occhi infuso
ne l’imagine mia, il mio si fece,
e fissi li occhi al sole oltre nostr’uso.

Molto è licito là, che qui non lece
a le nostre virtù, mercé del loco
fatto per proprio de l’umana spece.

Io nol soffersi molto, né sì poco,
ch’io nol vedessi sfavillar dintorno,
com’ ferro che bogliente esce del foco;

e di sùbito parve giorno a giorno
essere aggiunto, come quei che puote
avesse il ciel d’un altro sole addorno.

Beatrice tutta ne l’etterne rote
fissa con li occhi stava; e io in lei
le luci fissi, di là sù rimote.

Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei,
qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l’erba
che ‘l fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi.

Trasumanar significar per verba
non si poria; però l’essemplo basti
a cui esperïenza grazia serba.

S’i’ era sol di me quel che creasti
novellamente, amor che ‘l ciel governi,

tu ‘l sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti.

Quando la rota che tu sempiterni
desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso
con l’armonia che temperi e discerni,

parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
lago non fece alcun tanto disteso.

La novità del suono e ‘l grande lume
di lor cagion m’accesero un disio
mai non sentito di cotanto acume.

Ond’ella, che vedea me sì com’io,
a quïetarmi l’animo commosso,
pria ch’io a dimandar, la bocca aprio

e cominciò: “Tu stesso ti fai grosso
col falso imaginar, sì che non vedi
ciò che vedresti se l’avessi scosso.

Tu non se’ in terra, sì come tu credi;
ma folgore, fuggendo il proprio sito,
non corse come tu ch’ad esso riedi”.

S’io fui del primo dubbio disvestito
per le sorrise parolette brevi,
dentro ad un nuovo più fu’ inretito

e dissi: “Già contento requïevi
di grande ammirazion; ma ora ammiro
com’io trascenda questi corpi levi”.

Ond’ella, appresso d’un pïo sospiro,
li occhi drizzò ver’ me con quel sembiante
che madre fa sovra figlio deliro,

e cominciò: “Le cose tutte quante
hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma

che l’universo a Dio fa simigliante.

Qui veggion l’alte creature l’orma
de l’etterno valore, il qual è fine
al quale è fatta la toccata norma.

Ne l’ordine ch’io dico sono accline
tutte nature, per diverse sorti,
più al principio loro e men vicine;

onde si muovono a diversi porti
per lo gran mar de l’essere, e ciascuna
con istinto a lei dato che la porti.

Questi ne porta il foco inver’ la luna;
questi ne’ cor mortali è permotore;
questi la terra in sé stringe e aduna;

né pur le creature che son fore
d’intelligenza quest’arco saetta,
ma quelle c’ hanno intelletto e amore.

La provedenza, che cotanto assetta,
del suo lume fa ‘l ciel sempre quïeto
nel qual si volge quel c’ ha maggior fretta;

e ora lì, come a sito decreto,
cen porta la virtù di quella corda
che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.

Vero è che, come forma non s’accorda
molte fïate a l’intenzion de l’arte,
perch’a risponder la materia è sorda,

così da questo corso si diparte
talor la creatura, c’ ha podere
di piegar, così pinta, in altra parte;

e sì come veder si può cadere
foco di nube, sì l’impeto primo

l’atterra torto da falso piacere.

Non dei più ammirar, se bene stimo,
lo tuo salir, se non come d’un rivo
se d’alto monte scende giuso ad imo.

Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo
d’impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,
com’a terra quïete in foco vivo”.

Quinci rivolse inver’ lo cielo il viso.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto secondo

Canto secondo, ove tratta come Beatrice e l'auttore pervegnono al cielo de la Luna, aprendo la veritade de l'ombra ch'appare in essa; e qui comincia questa terza parte de la Commedia quanto al proprio dire.

O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti
dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,

tornate a riveder li vostri liti:
non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.

L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse;
Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo,
e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.

Voialtri pochi che drizzaste il collo
per tempo al pan de li angeli, del quale
vivesi qui ma non sen vien satollo,

metter potete ben per l'alto sale
vostro navigio, servando mio solco
dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna equale.

Que' glorïosi che passaro al Colco
non s'ammiraron come voi farete,
quando Iasón vider fatto bifolco.

La concreata e perpetüa sete
del deïforme regno cen portava
veloci quasi come 'l ciel vedete.

Beatrice in suso, e io in lei guardava;
e forse in tanto in quanto un quadrel posa
e vola e da la noce si dischiava,

giunto mi vidi ove mirabil cosa
mi torse il viso a sé; e però quella
cui non potea mia cura essere ascosa,

volta ver' me, sì lieta come bella,
"Drizza la mente in Dio grata", mi disse,
"che n' ha congiunti con la prima stella".

Parev'a me che nube ne coprisse
lucida, spessa, solida e pulita,
quasi adamante che lo sol ferisse.

Per entro sé l'etterna margarita
ne ricevette, com'acqua recepe
raggio di luce permanendo unita.

S'io era corpo, e qui non si concepe
com'una dimensione altra patio,
ch'esser convien se corpo in corpo repe,

accender ne dovria più il disio
di veder quella essenza in che si vede
come nostra natura e Dio s'unio.

Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,
non dimostrato, ma fia per sé noto
a guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede.

Io rispuosi: "Madonna, sì devoto
com'esser posso più, ringrazio lui
lo qual dal mortal mondo m' ha remoto.

Ma ditemi: che son li segni bui
di questo corpo, che là giuso in terra
fan di Cain favoleggiare altrui?".

Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi "S'elli erra
l'oppinïon", mi disse, "d'i mortali
dove chiave di senso non diserra,

certo non ti dovrien punger li strali
d’ammirazione omai, poi dietro ai sensi
vedi che la ragione ha corte l’ali. 57

Ma dimmi quel che tu da te ne pensi”.
E io: “Ciò che n’appar qua sù diverso
credo che fanno i corpi rari e densi”. 60

Ed ella: “Certo assai vedrai sommerso
nel falso il creder tuo, se bene ascolti
l’argomentar ch’io li farò avverso. 63

La spera ottava vi dimostra molti
lumi, li quali e nel quale e nel quanto
notar si posson di diversi volti. 66

Se raro e denso ciò facesser tanto,
una sola virtù sarebbe in tutti,
più e men distributa e altrettanto. 69

Virtù diverse esser convegnon frutti
di princìpi formali, e quei, for ch’uno,
seguiterieno a tua ragion distrutti. 72

Ancor, se raro fosse di quel bruno
cagion che tu dimandi, o d’oltre in parte
fora di sua materia sì digiuno 75

esto pianeto, o, sì come comparte
lo grasso e ‘l magro un corpo, così questo
nel suo volume cangerebbe carte. 78

Se ‘l primo fosse, fora manifesto
ne l’eclissi del sol, per trasparere
lo lume come in altro raro ingesto. 81

Questo non è: però è da vedere
de l’altro; e s’elli avvien ch’io l’altro cassi,
falsificato fia lo tuo parere. 84

S’elli è che questo raro non trapassi,
esser conviene un termine da onde
lo suo contrario più passar non lassi;

e indi l’altrui raggio si rifonde
così come color torna per vetro
lo qual di retro a sé piombo nasconde.

Or dirai tu ch’el si dimostra tetro
ivi lo raggio più che in altre parti,
per esser lì refratto più a retro.

Da questa instanza può deliberarti
esperïenza, se già mai la provi,
ch’esser suol fonte ai rivi di vostr’arti.

Tre specchi prenderai; e i due rimovi
da te d’un modo, e l’altro, più rimosso,
tr’ambo li primi li occhi tuoi ritrovi.

Rivolto ad essi, fa che dopo il dosso
ti stea un lume che i tre specchi accenda
e torni a te da tutti ripercosso.

Ben che nel quanto tanto non si stenda
la vista più lontana, lì vedrai
come convien ch’igualmente risplenda.

Or, come ai colpi de li caldi rai
de la neve riman nudo il suggetto
e dal colore e dal freddo primai,

così rimaso te ne l’intelletto
voglio informar di luce sì vivace,
che ti tremolerà nel suo aspetto.

Dentro dal ciel de la divina pace
si gira un corpo ne la cui virtute
l’esser di tutto suo contento giace.

Lo ciel seguente, c’ ha tante vedute,
quell’esser parte per diverse essenze,
da lui distratte e da lui contenute.

Li altri giron per varie differenze
le distinzion che dentro da sé hanno
dispongono a lor fini e lor semenze.

Questi organi del mondo così vanno,
come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado,
che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno.

Riguarda bene omai sì com’io vado
per questo loco al vero che disiri,
sì che poi sappi sol tener lo guado.

Lo moto e la virtù d’i santi giri,
come dal fabbro l’arte del martello,
da’ beati motor convien che spiri;

e ‘l ciel cui tanti lumi fanno bello,
de la mente profonda che lui volve
prende l’image e fassene suggello.

E come l’alma dentro a vostra polve
per differenti membra e conformate
a diverse potenze si risolve,

così l’intelligenza sua bontate
multiplicata per le stelle spiega,
girando sé sovra sua unitate.

Virtù diversa fa diversa lega
col prezïoso corpo ch’ella avviva,
nel qual, sì come vita in voi, si lega.

Per la natura lieta onde deriva,
la virtù mista per lo corpo luce
come letizia per pupilla viva.

Da essa vien ciò che da luce a luce
par differente, non da denso e raro;
essa è formal principio che produce,

conforme a sua bontà, lo turbo e ‘l chiaro”.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto terzo

Canto terzo, nel quale si tratta di quello medesimo cielo de la Luna e di certi spiriti che appariro in esso; e solve qui una questione: cioè se li spiriti che sono in cielo di sotto vorrebbero esser più sì ch'elli siano.

Quel sol che pria d'amor mi scaldò 'l petto,
di bella verità m'avea scoverto,
provando e riprovando, il dolce aspetto;

e io, per confessar corretto e certo
me stesso, tanto quanto si convenne
leva' il capo a proferer più erto;

ma visïone apparve che ritenne
a sé me tanto stretto, per vedersi,
che di mia confession non mi sovvenne.

Quali per vetri trasparenti e tersi,
o ver per acque nitide e tranquille,
non sì profonde che i fondi sien persi,

tornan d'i nostri visi le postille
debili sì, che perla in bianca fronte
non vien men forte a le nostre pupille;

tali vid'io più facce a parlar pronte;
per ch'io dentro a l'error contrario corsi
a quel ch'accese amor tra l'omo e 'l fonte.

Sùbito sì com'io di lor m'accorsi,
quelle stimando specchiati sembianti,
per veder di cui fosser, li occhi torsi;

e nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti
dritti nel lume de la dolce guida,
che, sorridendo, ardea ne li occhi santi.

“Non ti maravigliar perch’io sorrida”,
mi disse, “appresso il tuo püeril coto,
poi sopra ‘l vero ancor lo piè non fida,

ma te rivolve, come suole, a vòto:
vere sustanze son ciò che tu vedi,
qui rilegate per manco di voto.

Però parla con esse e odi e credi;
ché la verace luce che le appaga
da sé non lascia lor torcer li piedi”.

E io a l’ombra che parea più vaga
di ragionar, drizza’ mi, e cominciai,
quasi com’uom cui troppa voglia smaga:

“O ben creato spirito, che a’ rai
di vita etterna la dolcezza senti
che, non gustata, non s’intende mai,

grazïoso mi fia se mi contenti
del nome tuo e de la vostra sorte”.
Ond’ella, pronta e con occhi ridenti:

“La nostra carità non serra porte
a giusta voglia, se non come quella
che vuol simile a sé tutta sua corte.

I’ fui nel mondo vergine sorella;
e se la mente tua ben sé riguarda,
non mi ti celerà l’esser più bella,

ma riconoscerai ch’i’ son Piccarda,
che, posta qui con questi altri beati,
beata sono in la spera più tarda.

Li nostri affetti, che solo infiammati
son nel piacer de lo Spirito Santo,
letizian del suo ordine formati.

E questa sorte che par giù cotanto,
però n’è data, perché fuor negletti
li nostri voti, e vòti in alcun canto”.

Ond’io a lei: “Ne’ mirabili aspetti
vostri risplende non so che divino
che vi trasmuta da’ primi concetti:

però non fui a rimembrar festino;
ma or m’aiuta ciò che tu mi dici,
sì che raffigurar m’è più latino.

Ma dimmi: voi che siete qui felici,
disiderate voi più alto loco
per più vedere e per più farvi amici?”.

Con quelle altr’ombre pria sorrise un poco;
da indi mi rispuose tanto lieta,
ch’arder parea d’amor nel primo foco:

“Frate, la nostra volontà quïeta
virtù di carità, che fa volerne
sol quel ch’avemo, e d’altro non ci asseta.

Se disïassimo esser più superne,
foran discordi li nostri disiri
dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne;

che vedrai non capere in questi giri,
s’essere in carità è qui necesse,
e se la sua natura ben rimiri.

Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse
tenersi dentro a la divina voglia,
per ch’una fansi nostre voglie stesse;

sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace
com’a lo re che ‘n suo voler ne ‘nvoglia.

E ‘n la sua volontade è nostra pace:
ell’è quel mare al qual tutto si move
ciò ch’ella crïa o che natura face”.

Chiaro mi fu allor come ogne dove
in cielo è paradiso, etsi la grazia
del sommo ben d’un modo non vi piove.

Ma sì com’elli avvien, s’un cibo sazia
e d’un altro rimane ancor la gola,
che quel si chere e di quel si ringrazia,

così fec’io con atto e con parola,
per apprender da lei qual fu la tela
onde non trasse infino a co la spuola.

“Perfetta vita e alto merto inciela
donna più sù”, mi disse, “a la cui norma
nel vostro mondo giù si veste e vela,

perché fino al morir si vegghi e dorma
con quello sposo ch’ogne voto accetta
che caritate a suo piacer conforma.

Dal mondo, per seguirla, giovinetta
fuggi’ mi, e nel suo abito mi chiusi
e promisi la via de la sua setta.

Uomini poi, a mal più ch’a bene usi,
fuor mi rapiron de la dolce chiostra:
Iddio si sa qual poi mia vita fusi.

E quest’altro splendor che ti si mostra
da la mia destra parte e che s’accende
di tutto il lume de la spera nostra,

ciò ch’io dico di me, di sé intende;
sorella fu, e così le fu tolta
di capo l’ombra de le sacre bende.

Ma poi che pur al mondo fu rivolta
contra suo grado e contra buona usanza,
non fu dal vel del cor già mai disciolta.

Quest'è la luce de la gran Costanza
che del secondo vento di Soave
generò 'l terzo e l'ultima possanza".

Così parlommi, e poi cominciò 'Ave,
Maria' cantando, e cantando vanio
come per acqua cupa cosa grave.

La vista mia, che tanto lei seguio
quanto possibil fu, poi che la perse,
volsesi al segno di maggior disio,

e a Beatrice tutta si converse;
ma quella folgorò nel mïo sguardo
sì che da prima il viso non sofferse;

e ciò mi fece a dimandar più tardo.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto quarto

Canto IV, dove in quello medesimo cielo due veritadi si manifestano da Beatrice: l'una è del luogo de' beati, e l'altra si è de la voluntate mista e de la absuluta; e propone terza questione del voto e se si puote satisfare al voto rotto.

Intra due cibi, distanti e moventi
d'un modo, prima si morria di fame,
che liber'omo l'un recasse ai denti;

sì si starebbe un agno intra due brame
di fieri lupi, igualmente temendo;
sì si starebbe un cane intra due dame:

per che, s'i' mi tacea, me non riprendo,
da li miei dubbi d'un modo sospinto,
poi ch'era necessario, né commendo.

Io mi tacea, ma 'l mio disir dipinto
m'era nel viso, e 'l dimandar con ello,
più caldo assai che per parlar distinto.

Fé sì Beatrice qual fé Danïello,
Nabuccodonosor levando d'ira,
che l'avea fatto ingiustamente fello;

e disse: "Io veggio ben come ti tira
uno e altro disio, sì che tua cura
sé stessa lega sì che fuor non spira.

Tu argomenti: "Se 'l buon voler dura,
la vïolenza altrui per qual ragione
di meritar mi scema la misura?".

Ancor di dubitar ti dà cagione
parer tornarsi l'anime a le stelle,
secondo la sentenza di Platone.

Queste son le question che nel tuo velle
pontano igualmente; e però pria
tratterò quella che più ha di felle.

D’i Serafin colui che più s’india,
Moïsè, Samuel, e quel Giovanni
che prender vuoli, io dico, non Maria,

non hanno in altro cielo i loro scanni
che questi spirti che mo t’appariro,
né hanno a l’esser lor più o meno anni;

ma tutti fanno bello il primo giro,
e differentemente han dolce vita
per sentir più e men l’etterno spiro.

Qui si mostraro, non perché sortita
sia questa spera lor, ma per far segno
de la celestïal c’ ha men salita.

Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,
però che solo da sensato apprende
ciò che fa poscia d’intelletto degno.

Per questo la Scrittura condescende
a vostra facultate, e piedi e mano
attribuisce a Dio e altro intende;

e Santa Chiesa con aspetto umano
Gabrïel e Michel vi rappresenta,
e l’altro che Tobia rifece sano.

Quel che Timeo de l’anime argomenta
non è simile a ciò che qui si vede,
però che, come dice, par che senta.

Dice che l’alma a la sua stella riede,
credendo quella quindi esser decisa
quando natura per forma la diede;

e forse sua sentenza è d’altra guisa
che la voce non suona, ed esser puote
con intenzion da non esser derisa.

S’elli intende tornare a queste ruote
l’onor de la influenza e ‘l biasmo, forse
in alcun vero suo arco percuote.

Questo principio, male inteso, torse
già tutto il mondo quasi, sì che Giove,
Mercurio e Marte a nominar trascorse.

L’altra dubitazion che ti commove
ha men velen, però che sua malizia
non ti poria menar da me altrove.

Parere ingiusta la nostra giustizia
ne li occhi d’i mortali, è argomento
di fede e non d’eretica nequizia.

Ma perché puote vostro accorgimento
ben penetrare a questa veritate,
come disiri, ti farò contento.

Se vïolenza è quando quel che pate
nïente conferisce a quel che sforza,
non fuor quest’alme per essa scusate:

ché volontà, se non vuol, non s’ammorza,
ma fa come natura face in foco,
se mille volte vïolenza il torza.

Per che, s’ella si piega assai o poco,
segue la forza; e così queste fero
possendo rifuggir nel santo loco.

Se fosse stato lor volere intero,
come tenne Lorenzo in su la grada,
e fece Muzio a la sua man severo,

così l’avria ripinte per la strada
ond’eran tratte, come fuoro sciolte;
ma così salda voglia è troppo rada.

E per queste parole, se ricolte
l’ hai come dei, è l’argomento casso
che t’avria fatto noia ancor più volte.

Ma or ti s’attraversa un altro passo
dinanzi a li occhi, tal che per te stesso
non usciresti: pria saresti lasso.

Io t’ ho per certo ne la mente messo
ch’alma beata non poria mentire,
però ch’è sempre al primo vero appresso;

e poi potesti da Piccarda udire
che l’affezion del vel Costanza tenne;
sì ch’ella par qui meco contradire.

Molte fiate già, frate, addivenne
che, per fuggir periglio, contra grato
si fé di quel che far non si convenne;

come Almeone, che, di ciò pregato
dal padre suo, la propria madre spense,
per non perder pietà si fé spietato.

A questo punto voglio che tu pense
che la forza al voler si mischia, e fanno
sì che scusar non si posson l’offense.

Voglia assoluta non consente al danno;
ma consentevi in tanto in quanto teme,
se si ritrae, cadere in più affanno.

Però, quando Piccarda quello spreme,
de la voglia assoluta intende, e io
de l’altra; sì che ver diciamo insieme”.

Cotal fu l’ondeggiar del santo rio
ch’uscì del fonte ond’ogne ver deriva;
tal puose in pace uno e altro disio.

“O amanza del primo amante, o diva”,
diss’io appresso, “il cui parlar m’inonda
e scalda sì, che più e più m’avviva,

non è l’affezion mia tanto profonda,
che basti a render voi grazia per grazia;
ma quei che vede e puote a ciò risponda.

Io veggio ben che già mai non si sazia
nostro intelletto, se ‘l ver non lo illustra
di fuor dal qual nessun vero si spazia.

Posasi in esso, come fera in lustra,
tosto che giunto l’ ha; e giugner puollo:
se non, ciascun disio sarebbe frustra.

Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo,
a piè del vero il dubbio; ed è natura
ch’al sommo pinge noi di collo in collo.

Questo m’invita, questo m’assicura
con reverenza, donna, a dimandarvi
d’un’altra verità che m’è oscura.

Io vo’ saper se l’uom può sodisfarvi
ai voti manchi sì con altri beni,
ch’a la vostra statera non sien parvi”.

Beatrice mi guardò con li occhi pieni
di faville d’amor così divini,
che, vinta, mia virtute diè le reni,

e quasi mi perdei con li occhi chini.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quinto

Canto V, nel quale solve una questione premessa nel precedente canto e ammaestra li cristiani intorno a li voti ch'elli fanno a Dio; ed entrasi nel cielo di Mercurio, e qui comincia la seconda parte di questa cantica.

"S'io ti fiammeggio nel caldo d'amore
di là dal modo che 'n terra si vede,
sì che del viso tuo vinco il valore,

non ti maravigliar, ché ciò procede
da perfetto veder, che, come apprende,
così nel bene appreso move il piede.

Io veggio ben sì come già resplende
ne l'intelletto tuo l'etterna luce,
che, vista, sola e sempre amore accende;

e s'altra cosa vostro amor seduce,
non è se non di quella alcun vestigio,
mal conosciuto, che quivi traluce.

Tu vuo' saper se con altro servigio,
per manco voto, si può render tanto
che l'anima sicuri di letigio".

Sì cominciò Beatrice questo canto;
e sì com'uom che suo parlar non spezza,
continüò così 'l processo santo:

"Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
fesse creando, e a la sua bontate
più conformato, e quel ch'e' più apprezza,

fu de la volontà la libertate;
di che le creature intelligenti,
e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate.

Or ti parrà, se tu quinci argomenti,
l’alto valor del voto, s’è sì fatto
che Dio consenta quando tu consenti;

ché, nel fermar tra Dio e l’omo il patto,
vittima fassi di questo tesoro,
tal quale io dico; e fassi col suo atto.

Dunque che render puossi per ristoro?
Se credi bene usar quel c’ hai offerto,
di maltolletto vuo’ far buon lavoro.

Tu se’ omai del maggior punto certo;
ma perché Santa Chiesa in ciò dispensa,
che par contra lo ver ch’i’ t’ ho scoverto,

convienti ancor sedere un poco a mensa,
però che ‘l cibo rigido c’ hai preso,
richiede ancora aiuto a tua dispensa.

Apri la mente a quel ch’io ti paleso
e fermalvi entro; ché non fa scïenza,
sanza lo ritenere, avere inteso.

Due cose si convegnono a l’essenza
di questo sacrificio: l’una è quella
di che si fa; l’altr’è la convenenza.

Quest’ultima già mai non si cancella
se non servata; e intorno di lei
sì preciso di sopra si favella:

però necessitato fu a li Ebrei
pur l’offerere, ancor ch’alcuna offerta
si permutasse, come saver dei.

L’altra, che per materia t’è aperta,
puote ben esser tal, che non si falla
se con altra materia si converta.

Ma non trasmuti carco a la sua spalla
per suo arbitrio alcun, sanza la volta
e de la chiave bianca e de la gialla;

e ogne permutanza credi stolta,
se la cosa dimessa in la sorpresa
come ‘l quattro nel sei non è raccolta.

Però qualunque cosa tanto pesa
per suo valor che tragga ogne bilancia,
sodisfar non si può con altra spesa.

Non prendan li mortali il voto a ciancia;
siate fedeli, e a ciò far non bieci,
come Ieptè a la sua prima mancia;

cui più si convenia dicer ‘Mal feci’,
che, servando, far peggio; e così stolto
ritrovar puoi il gran duca de’ Greci,

onde pianse Efigènia il suo bel volto,
e fé pianger di sé i folli e i savi
ch’udir parlar di così fatto cólto.

Siate, Cristiani, a muovervi più gravi:
non siate come penna ad ogne vento,
e non crediate ch’ogne acqua vi lavi.

Avete il novo e ‘l vecchio Testamento,
e ‘l pastor de la Chiesa che vi guida;
questo vi basti a vostro salvamento.

Se mala cupidigia altro vi grida,
uomini siate, e non pecore matte,
sì che ‘l Giudeo di voi tra voi non rida!

Non fate com’agnel che lascia il latte
de la sua madre, e semplice e lascivo
seco medesmo a suo piacer combatte!”.

Così Beatrice a me com’ïo scrivo;
poi si rivolse tutta disïante
a quella parte ove ‘l mondo è più vivo.

Lo suo tacere e ‘l trasmutar sembiante
puoser silenzio al mio cupido ingegno,
che già nuove questioni avea davante;

e sì come saetta che nel segno
percuote pria che sia la corda queta,
così corremmo nel secondo regno.

Quivi la donna mia vid’io sì lieta,
come nel lume di quel ciel si mise,
che più lucente se ne fé ‘l pianeta.

E se la stella si cambiò e rise,
qual mi fec’io che pur da mia natura
trasmutabile son per tutte guise!

Come ‘n peschiera ch’è tranquilla e pura
traggonsi i pesci a ciò che vien di fori
per modo che lo stimin lor pastura,

sì vid’io ben più di mille splendori
trarsi ver’ noi, e in ciascun s’udia:
“Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori”.

E sì come ciascuno a noi venìa,
vedeasi l’ombra piena di letizia
nel folgór chiaro che di lei uscia.

Pensa, lettor, se quel che qui s’inizia
non procedesse, come tu avresti
di più savere angosciosa carizia;

e per te vederai come da questi
m’era in disio d’udir lor condizioni,
sì come a li occhi mi fur manifesti.

“O bene nato a cui veder li troni
del trïunfo etternal concede grazia
prima che la milizia s’abbandoni,

del lume che per tutto il ciel si spazia
noi semo accesi; e però, se disii
di noi chiarirti, a tuo piacer ti sazia”.

Così da un di quelli spirti pii
detto mi fu; e da Beatrice: “Dì, dì
sicuramente, e credi come a dii”.

“Io veggio ben sì come tu t’annidi
nel proprio lume, e che de li occhi il traggi,
perch’e’ corusca sì come tu ridi;

ma non so chi tu se’, né perché aggi,
anima degna, il grado de la spera
che si vela a’ mortai con altrui raggi”.

Questo diss’io diritto a la lumera
che pria m’avea parlato; ond’ella fessi
lucente più assai di quel ch’ell’era.

Sì come il sol che si cela elli stessi
per troppa luce, come ‘l caldo ha róse
le temperanze d’i vapori spessi,

per più letizia sì mi si nascose
dentro al suo raggio la figura santa;
e così chiusa chiusa mi rispuose

nel modo che ‘l seguente canto canta.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto sesto

Canto VI, dove, nel cielo di Mercurio, Iustiniano imperadore sotto brevità narra tutti li grandi fatti operati per li Romani sotto la ‘nsegna de l’aquila, da l’avvenimento di Enea in Italia infino al tempo di Longobardi; e alcune cose si dicono qui in laude di Romeo visconte del conte Ramondo Berlinghieri di Proenza.

«Poscia che Costantin l’aquila volse
contr’ al corso del ciel, ch’ella seguio
dietro a l’antico che Lavina tolse,

cento e cent’ anni e più l’uccel di Dio
ne lo stremo d’Europa si ritenne,
vicino a’ monti de’ quai prima uscìo;

e sotto l’ombra de le sacre penne
governò ‘l mondo lì di mano in mano,
e, sì cangiando, in su la mia pervenne.

Cesare fui e son Iustinïano,
che, per voler del primo amor ch’i’ sento,
d’entro le leggi trassi il troppo e ‘l vano.

E prima ch’io a l’ovra fossi attento,
una natura in Cristo esser, non piùe,
credea, e di tal fede era contento;

ma ‘l benedetto Agapito, che fue
sommo pastore, a la fede sincera
mi dirizzò con le parole sue.

Io li credetti; e ciò che ‘n sua fede era,
vegg’ io or chiaro sì, come tu vedi
ogni contradizione e falsa e vera.

Tosto che con la Chiesa mossi i piedi,
a Dio per grazia piacque di spirarmi
l’alto lavoro, e tutto ‘n lui mi diedi;

e al mio Belisar commendai l’armi,
cui la destra del ciel fu sì congiunta,
che segno fu ch’i’ dovessi posarmi. 27

Or qui a la question prima s’appunta
la mia risposta; ma sua condizione
mi stringe a seguitare alcuna giunta, 30

perché tu veggi con quanta ragione
si move contr’ al sacrosanto segno
e chi ‘l s’appropria e chi a lui s’oppone. 33

Vedi quanta virtù l’ha fatto degno
di reverenza; e cominciò da l’ora
che Pallante morì per darli regno. 36

Tu sai ch’el fece in Alba sua dimora
per trecento anni e oltre, infino al fine
che i tre a’ tre pugnar per lui ancora. 39

E sai ch’el fé dal mal de le Sabine
al dolor di Lucrezia in sette regi,
vincendo intorno le genti vicine. 42

Sai quel ch’el fé portato da li egregi
Romani incontro a Brenno, incontro a Pirro,
incontro a li altri principi e collegi; 45

onde Torquato e Quinzio, che dal cirro
negletto fu nomato, i Deci e ‘ Fabi
ebber la fama che volontier mirro. 48

Esso atterrò l’orgoglio de li Aràbi
che di retro ad Anibale passaro
l’alpestre rocce, Po, di che tu labi. 51

Sott’ esso giovanetti trïunfaro
Scipïone e Pompeo; e a quel colle
sotto ‘l qual tu nascesti parve amaro. 54

Poi, presso al tempo che tutto ‘l ciel volle
redur lo mondo a suo modo sereno,
Cesare per voler di Roma il tolle. 57

E quel che fé da Varo infino a Reno,
Isara vide ed Era e vide Senna
e ogne valle onde Rodano è pieno. 60

Quel che fé poi ch’elli uscì di Ravenna
e saltò Rubicon, fu di tal volo,
che nol seguiteria lingua né penna. 63

Inver’ la Spagna rivolse lo stuolo,
poi ver’ Durazzo, e Farsalia percosse
sì ch’al Nil caldo si sentì del duolo. 66

Antandro e Simeonta, onde si mosse,
rivide e là dov’ Ettore si cuba;
e mal per Tolomeo poscia si scosse. 69

Da indi scese folgorando a Iuba;
onde si volse nel vostro occidente,
ove sentia la pompeana tuba. 72

Di quel che fé col baiulo seguente,
Bruto con Cassio ne l’inferno latra,
e Modena e Perugia fu dolente. 75

Piangene ancor la trista Cleopatra,
che, fuggendoli innanzi, dal colubro
la morte prese subitana e atra. 78

Con costui corse infino al lito rubro;
con costui puose il mondo in tanta pace,
che fu serrato a Giano il suo delubro. 81

Ma ciò che ‘l segno che parlar mi face
fatto avea prima e poi era fatturo
per lo regno mortal ch’a lui soggiace, 84

diventa in apparenza poco e scuro,
se in mano al terzo Cesare si mira
con occhio chiaro e con affetto puro;

ché la viva giustizia che mi spira,
li concedette, in mano a quel ch'i' dico,
gloria di far vendetta a la sua ira.

Or qui t'ammira in ciò ch'io ti replìco:
poscia con Tito a far vendetta corse
de la vendetta del peccato antico.

E quando il dente longobardo morse
la Santa Chiesa, sotto le sue ali
Carlo Magno, vincendo, la soccorse.

Omai puoi giudicar di quei cotali
ch'io accusai di sopra e di lor falli,
che son cagion di tutti vostri mali.

L'uno al pubblico segno i gigli gialli
oppone, e l'altro appropria quello a parte,
sì ch'è forte a veder chi più si falli.

Faccian li Ghibellin, faccian lor arte
sott' altro segno, ché mal segue quello
sempre chi la giustizia e lui diparte;

e non l'abbatta esto Carlo novello
coi Guelfi suoi, ma tema de li artigli
ch'a più alto leon trasser lo vello.

Molte fïate già pianser li figli
per la colpa del padre, e non si creda
che Dio trasmuti l'armi per suoi gigli!

Questa picciola stella si correda
d'i buoni spirti che son stati attivi
perché onore e fama li succeda:

e quando li disiri poggian quivi,
sì disvïando, pur convien che i raggi
del vero amore in sù poggin men vivi.

Ma nel commensurar d’i nostri gaggi
col merto è parte di nostra letizia,
perché non li vedem minor né maggi.

Quindi addolcisce la viva giustizia
in noi l’affetto sì, che non si puote
torcer già mai ad alcuna nequizia.

Diverse voci fanno dolci note;
così diversi scanni in nostra vita
rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote.

E dentro a la presente margarita
luce la luce di Romeo, di cui
fu l’ovra grande e bella mal gradita.

Ma i Provenzai che fecer contra lui
non hanno riso; e però mal cammina
qual si fa danno del ben fare altrui.

Quattro figlie ebbe, e ciascuna reina,
Ramondo Beringhiere, e ciò li fece
Romeo, persona umìle e peregrina.

E poi il mosser le parole biece
a dimandar ragione a questo giusto,
che li assegnò sette e cinque per diece,

indi partissi povero e vetusto;
e se ‘l mondo sapesse il cor ch’elli ebbe
mendicando sua vita a frusto a frusto,

assai lo loda, e più lo loderebbe».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto settimo

Canto VII, nel quale Beatrice mostra come la vendetta fatta per Tito de la morte di Gesù Cristo nostro Salvatore fue giusta, essendo la morte di Gesù Cristo giusta per ricomperamento de l'umana generazione e solvimento del peccato del primo padre.

«Osanna, sanctus Deus sabaòth,
superillustrans claritate tua
felices ignes horum malacòth!».

Così, volgendosi a la nota sua,
fu viso a me cantare essa sustanza,
sopra la qual doppio lume s'addua;

ed essa e l'altre mossero a sua danza,
e quasi velocissime faville
mi si velar di sùbita distanza.

Io dubitava e dicea 'Dille, dille!'
fra me, 'dille' dicea, 'a la mia donna
che mi diseta con le dolci stille'.

Ma quella reverenza che s'indonna
di tutto me, pur per Be e per ice,
mi richinava come l'uom ch'assonna.

Poco sofferse me cotal Beatrice
e cominciò, raggiandomi d'un riso
tal, che nel foco faria l'uom felice:

«Secondo mio infallibile avviso,
come giusta vendetta giustamente
punita fosse, t'ha in pensier miso;

ma io ti solverò tosto la mente;
e tu ascolta, ché le mie parole
di gran sentenza ti faran presente.

Per non soffrire a la virtù che vole
freno a suo prode, quell' uom che non nacque,
dannando sé, dannò tutta sua prole;

onde l'umana specie inferma giacque
giù per secoli molti in grande errore,
fin ch'al Verbo di Dio discender piacque

u' la natura, che dal suo fattore
s'era allungata, unì a sé in persona
con l'atto sol del suo etterno amore.

Or drizza il viso a quel ch'or si ragiona:
questa natura al suo fattore unita,
qual fu creata, fu sincera e buona;

ma per sé stessa pur fu ella sbandita
di paradiso, però che si torse
da via di verità e da sua vita.

La pena dunque che la croce porse
s'a la natura assunta si misura,
nulla già mai sì giustamente morse;

e così nulla fu di tanta ingiura,
guardando a la persona che sofferse,
in che era contratta tal natura.

Però d'un atto uscir cose diverse:
ch'a Dio e a' Giudei piacque una morte;
per lei tremò la terra e 'l ciel s'aperse.

Non ti dee oramai parer più forte,
quando si dice che giusta vendetta
poscia vengiata fu da giusta corte.

Ma io veggi' or la tua mente ristretta
di pensiero in pensier dentro ad un nodo,
del qual con gran disio solver s'aspetta.

Tu dici: “Ben discerno ciò ch’i’ odo;
ma perché Dio volesse, m’è occulto,
a nostra redenzion pur questo modo”.

Questo decreto, frate, sta sepulto
a li occhi di ciascuno il cui ingegno
ne la fiamma d’amor non è adulto.

Veramente, però ch’a questo segno
molto si mira e poco si discerne,
dirò perché tal modo fu più degno.

La divina bontà, che da sé sperne
ogne livore, ardendo in sé, sfavilla
sì che dispiega le bellezze etterne.

Ciò che da lei sanza mezzo distilla
non ha poi fine, perché non si move
la sua imprenta quand’ ella sigilla.

Ciò che da essa sanza mezzo piove
libero è tutto, perché non soggiace
a la virtute de le cose nove.

Più l’è conforme, e però più le piace;
ché l’ardor santo ch’ogne cosa raggia,
ne la più somigliante è più vivace.

Di tutte queste dote s’avvantaggia
l’umana creatura, e s’una manca,
di sua nobilità convien che caggia.

Solo il peccato è quel che la disfranca
e falla dissimìle al sommo bene,
per che del lume suo poco s’imbianca;

e in sua dignità mai non rivene,
se non rïempie, dove colpa vòta,
contra mal dilettar con giuste pene.

Vostra natura, quando peccò tota
nel seme suo, da queste dignitadi,
come di paradiso, fu remota;

né ricovrar potiensi, se tu badi
ben sottilmente, per alcuna via,
sanza passar per un di questi guadi:

o che Dio solo per sua cortesia
dimesso avesse, o che l'uom per sé isso
avesse sodisfatto a sua follia.

Ficca mo l'occhio per entro l'abisso
de l'etterno consiglio, quanto puoi
al mio parlar distrettamente fisso.

Non potea l'uomo ne' termini suoi
mai sodisfar, per non potere ir giuso
con umiltate obedïendo poi,

quanto disobediendo intese ir suso;
e questa è la cagion per che l'uom fue
da poter sodisfar per sé dischiuso.

Dunque a Dio convenia con le vie sue
riparar l'omo a sua intera vita,
dico con l'una, o ver con amendue.

Ma perché l'ovra tanto è più gradita
da l'operante, quanto più appresenta
de la bontà del core ond' ell' è uscita,

la divina bontà che 'l mondo imprenta,
di proceder per tutte le sue vie,
a rilevarvi suso, fu contenta.

Né tra l'ultima notte e 'l primo die
sì alto o sì magnifico processo,
o per l'una o per l'altra, fu o fie:

ché più largo fu Dio a dar sé stesso
per far l’uom sufficiente a rilevarsi,
che s’elli avesse sol da sé dimesso;

e tutti li altri modi erano scarsi
a la giustizia, se ‘l Figliuol di Dio
non fosse umilïato ad incarnarsi.

Or per empierti bene ogne disio,
ritorno a dichiararti in alcun loco,
perché tu veggi lì così com’ io.

Tu dici: “Io veggio l’acqua, io veggio il foco,
l’aere e la terra e tutte lor misture
venire a corruzione, e durar poco;

e queste cose pur furon creature;
per che, se ciò ch’è detto è stato vero,
esser dovrien da corruzion sicure”.

Li angeli, frate, e ‘l paese sincero
nel qual tu se’, dir si posson creati,
sì come sono, in loro essere intero;

ma li alimenti che tu hai nomati
e quelle cose che di lor si fanno
da creata virtù sono informati.

Creata fu la materia ch’elli hanno;
creata fu la virtù informante
in queste stelle che ‘ntorno a lor vanno.

L’anima d’ogne bruto e de le piante
di complession potenzïata tira
lo raggio e ‘l moto de le luci sante;

ma vostra vita sanza mezzo spira
la somma beninanza, e la innamora
di sé sì che poi sempre la disira.

E quinci puoi argomentare ancora
vostra resurrezion, se tu ripensi
come l’umana carne fessi allora 147

che li primi parenti intrambo fensi».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ottavo

Canto VIII, nel quale si manifestano alcune questioni per Carlo giovane, re d'Ungheria, il quale si mostroe nel circulo di Venere; e qui comincia la terza parte di questa cantica.

Solea creder lo mondo in suo periclo
che la bella Ciprigna il folle amore
raggiasse, volta nel terzo epiciclo;

per che non pur a lei faceano onore
di sacrificio e di votivo grido
le genti antiche ne l'antico errore;

ma Dïone onoravano e Cupido,
quella per madre sua, questo per figlio,
e dicean ch'el sedette in grembo a Dido;

e da costei ond' io principio piglio
pigliavano il vocabol de la stella
che 'l sol vagheggia or da coppa or da ciglio.

Io non m'accorsi del salire in ella;
ma d'esservi entro mi fé assai fede
la donna mia ch'i' vidi far più bella.

E come in fiamma favilla si vede,
e come in voce voce si discerne,
quand' una è ferma e altra va e riede,

vid' io in essa luce altre lucerne
muoversi in giro più e men correnti,
al modo, credo, di lor viste interne.

Di fredda nube non disceser venti,
o visibili o no, tanto festini,
che non paressero impediti e lenti

a chi avesse quei lumi divini
veduti a noi venir, lasciando il giro
pria cominciato in li alti Serafini;

e dentro a quei che più innanzi appariro
sonava ‘Osanna’ sì, che unque poi
di rïudir non fui sanza disiro.

Indi si fece l’un più presso a noi
e solo incominciò: «Tutti sem presti
al tuo piacer, perché di noi ti gioi.

Noi ci volgiam coi principi celesti
d’un giro e d’un girare e d’una sete,
ai quali tu del mondo già dicesti:

‘Voi che ‘ntendendo il terzo ciel movete’;
e sem sì pien d’amor, che, per piacerti,
non fia men dolce un poco di quïete».

Poscia che li occhi miei si fuoro offerti
a la mia donna reverenti, ed essa
fatti li avea di sé contenti e certi,

rivolsersi a la luce che promessa
tanto s’avea, e «Deh, chi siete?» fue
la voce mia di grande affetto impressa.

E quanta e quale vid’ io lei far piùe
per allegrezza nova che s’accrebbe,
quando parlai, a l’allegrezze sue!

Così fatta, mi disse: «Il mondo m’ebbe
giù poco tempo; e se più fosse stato,
molto sarà di mal, che non sarebbe.

La mia letizia mi ti tien celato
che mi raggia dintorno e mi nasconde
quasi animal di sua seta fasciato.

Assai m’amasti, e avesti ben onde;
che s’io fossi giù stato, io ti mostrava
di mio amor più oltre che le fronde.

Quella sinistra riva che si lava
di Rodano poi ch’è misto con Sorga,
per suo segnore a tempo m’aspettava,

e quel corno d’Ausonia che s’imborga
di Bari e di Gaeta e di Catona,
da ove Tronto e Verde in mare sgorga.

Fulgeami già in fronte la corona
di quella terra che ‘l Danubio riga
poi che le ripe tedesche abbandona.

E la bella Trinacria, che caliga
tra Pachino e Peloro, sopra ‘l golfo
che riceve da Euro maggior briga,

non per Tifeo ma per nascente solfo,
attesi avrebbe li suoi regi ancora,
nati per me di Carlo e di Ridolfo,

se mala segnoria, che sempre accora
li popoli suggetti, non avesse
mosso Palermo a gridar: “Mora, mora!”.

E se mio frate questo antivedesse,
l’avara povertà di Catalogna
già fuggeria, perché non li offendesse;

ché veramente proveder bisogna
per lui, o per altrui, sì ch’a sua barca
carcata più d’incarco non si pogna.

La sua natura, che di larga parca
discese, avria mestier di tal milizia
che non curasse di mettere in arca».

«Però ch’i’ credo che l’alta letizia
che ‘l tuo parlar m’infonde, segnor mio,
là ‘ve ogne ben si termina e s’inizia,

per te si veggia come la vegg’ io,
grata m’è più; e anco quest’ ho caro
perché ‘l discerni rimirando in Dio.

Fatto m’hai lieto, e così mi fa chiaro,
poi che, parlando, a dubitar m’hai mosso
com’ esser può, di dolce seme, amaro».

Questo io a lui; ed elli a me: «S’io posso
mostrarti un vero, a quel che tu dimandi
terrai lo viso come tien lo dosso.

Lo ben che tutto il regno che tu scandi
volge e contenta, fa esser virtute
sua provedenza in questi corpi grandi.

E non pur le nature provedute
sono in la mente ch’è da sé perfetta,
ma esse insieme con la lor salute:

per che quantunque quest’ arco saetta
disposto cade a proveduto fine,
sì come cosa in suo segno diretta.

Se ciò non fosse, il ciel che tu cammine
producerebbe sì li suoi effetti,
che non sarebbero arti, ma ruine;

e ciò esser non può, se li ‘ntelletti
che muovon queste stelle non son manchi,
e manco il primo, che non li ha perfetti.

Vuo’ tu che questo ver più ti s’imbianchi?».
E io: «Non già; ché impossibil veggio
che la natura, in quel ch’è uopo, stanchi».

Ond’ elli ancora: «Or dì: sarebbe il peggio
per l’omo in terra, se non fosse cive?».
«Sì», rispuos’ io; «e qui ragion non cheggio».

«E puot’ elli esser, se giù non si vive
diversamente per diversi offici?
Non, se ‘l maestro vostro ben vi scrive».

Sì venne deducendo infino a quici;
poscia conchiuse: «Dunque esser diverse
convien di vostri effetti le radici:

per ch’un nasce Solone e altro Serse,
altro Melchisedèch e altro quello
che, volando per l’aere, il figlio perse.

La circular natura, ch’è suggello
a la cera mortal, fa ben sua arte,
ma non distingue l’un da l’altro ostello.

Quinci addivien ch’Esaù si diparte
per seme da Iacòb; e vien Quirino
da sì vil padre, che si rende a Marte.

Natura generata il suo cammino
simil farebbe sempre a’ generanti,
se non vincesse il proveder divino.

Or quel che t’era dietro t’è davanti:
ma perché sappi che di te mi giova,
un corollario voglio che t’ammanti.

Sempre natura, se fortuna trova
discorde a sé, com’ ogne altra semente
fuor di sua regïon, fa mala prova.

E se ‘l mondo là giù ponesse mente
al fondamento che natura pone,
seguendo lui, avria buona la gente.

Ma voi torcete a la religïone
tal che fia nato a cignersi la spada,
e fate re di tal ch’è da sermone;

onde la traccia vostra è fuor di strada».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto nono

Canto IX, nel quale parla madonna Cunizza di Romano, antidicendo alcuna cosa de la Marca di Trevigi; e parla Folco di Marsilia che fue vescovo d'essa.

Da poi che Carlo tuo, bella Clemenza,
m'ebbe chiarito, mi narrò li 'nganni
che ricever dovea la sua semenza;

ma disse: «Taci e lascia muover li anni»;
sì ch'io non posso dir se non che pianto
giusto verrà di retro ai vostri danni.

E già la vita di quel lume santo
rivolta s'era al Sol che la rïempie
come quel ben ch'a ogne cosa è tanto.

Ahi anime ingannate e fatture empie,
che da sì fatto ben torcete i cuori,
drizzando in vanità le vostre tempie!

Ed ecco un altro di quelli splendori
ver' me si fece, e 'l suo voler piacermi
significava nel chiarir di fori.

Li occhi di Bëatrice, ch'eran fermi
sovra me, come pria, di caro assenso
al mio disio certificato fermi.

«Deh, metti al mio voler tosto compenso,
beato spirto», dissi, «e fammi prova
ch'i' possa in te refletter quel ch'io penso!».

Onde la luce che m'era ancor nova,
del suo profondo, ond' ella pria cantava,
seguette come a cui di ben far giova:

«In quella parte de la terra prava
italica che siede tra Rïalto

e le fontane di Brenta e di Piava, 27

si leva un colle, e non surge molt' alto,
là onde scese già una facella
che fece a la contrada un grande assalto. 30

D'una radice nacqui e io ed ella:
Cunizza fui chiamata, e qui refulgo
perché mi vinse il lume d'esta stella; 33

ma lietamente a me medesma indulgo
la cagion di mia sorte, e non mi noia;
che parria forse forte al vostro vulgo. 36

Di questa luculenta e cara gioia
del nostro cielo che più m'è propinqua,
grande fama rimase; e pria che moia, 39

questo centesimo anno ancor s'incinqua:
vedi se far si dee l'omo eccellente,
sì ch'altra vita la prima relinqua. 42

E ciò non pensa la turba presente
che Tagliamento e Adice richiude,
né per esser battuta ancor si pente; 45

ma tosto fia che Padova al palude
cangerà l'acqua che Vincenza bagna,
per essere al dover le genti crude; 48

e dove Sile e Cagnan s'accompagna,
tal signoreggia e va con la testa alta,
che già per lui carpir si fa la ragna. 51

Piangerà Feltro ancora la difalta
de l'empio suo pastor, che sarà sconcia
sì, che per simil non s'entrò in malta. 54

Troppo sarebbe larga la bigoncia
che ricevesse il sangue ferrarese,

e stanco chi ‘l pesasse a oncia a oncia,

che donerà questo prete cortese
per mostrarsi di parte; e cotai doni
conformi fieno al viver del paese.

Sù sono specchi, voi dicete Troni,
onde refulge a noi Dio giudicante;
sì che questi parlar ne paion buoni».

Qui si tacette; e fecemi sembiante
che fosse ad altro volta, per la rota
in che si mise com’ era davante.

L’altra letizia, che m’era già nota
per cara cosa, mi si fece in vista
qual fin balasso in che lo sol percuota.

Per letiziar là sù fulgor s’acquista,
sì come riso qui; ma giù s’abbuia
l’ombra di fuor, come la mente è trista.

«Dio vede tutto, e tuo veder s’inluia»,
diss’ io, «beato spirto, sì che nulla
voglia di sé a te puot’ esser fuia.

Dunque la voce tua, che ‘l ciel trastulla
sempre col canto di quei fuochi pii
che di sei ali facen la coculla,

perché non satisface a’ miei disii?
Già non attendere’ io tua dimanda,
s’io m’intuassi, come tu t’inmii».

«La maggior valle in che l’acqua si spanda»,
incominciaro allor le sue parole,
«fuor di quel mar che la terra inghirlanda,

tra ‘ discordanti liti contra ‘l sole
tanto sen va, che fa meridïano

là dove l’orizzonte pria far suole. 87

Di quella valle fu’ io litorano
tra Ebro e Macra, che per cammin corto
parte lo Genovese dal Toscano. 90

Ad un occaso quasi e ad un orto
Buggea siede e la terra ond’ io fui,
che fé del sangue suo già caldo il porto. 93

Folco mi disse quella gente a cui
fu noto il nome mio; e questo cielo
di me s’imprenta, com’ io fe’ di lui; 96

ché più non arse la figlia di Belo,
noiando e a Sicheo e a Creusa,
di me, infin che si convenne al pelo; 99

né quella Rodopëa che delusa
fu da Demofoonte, né Alcide
quando Iole nel core ebbe rinchiusa. 102

Non però qui si pente, ma si ride,
non de la colpa, ch’a mente non torna,
ma del valor ch’ordinò e provide. 105

Qui si rimira ne l’arte ch’addorna
cotanto affetto, e discernesi ‘l bene
per che ‘l mondo di sù quel di giù torna. 108

Ma perché tutte le tue voglie piene
ten porti che son nate in questa spera,
proceder ancor oltre mi convene. 111

Tu vuo’ saper chi è in questa lumera
che qui appresso me così scintilla
come raggio di sole in acqua mera. 114

Or sappi che là entro si tranquilla
Raab; e a nostr’ ordine congiunta,

di lei nel sommo grado si sigilla.

Da questo cielo, in cui l’ombra s’appunta
che ‘l vostro mondo face, pria ch’altr’ alma
del trïunfo di Cristo fu assunta.

Ben si convenne lei lasciar per palma
in alcun cielo de l’alta vittoria
che s’acquistò con l’una e l’altra palma,

perch’ ella favorò la prima gloria
di Iosüè in su la Terra Santa,
che poco tocca al papa la memoria.

La tua città, che di colui è pianta
che pria volse le spalle al suo fattore
e di cui è la ‘nvidia tanto pianta,

produce e spande il maladetto fiore
c’ha disvïate le pecore e li agni,
però che fatto ha lupo del pastore.

Per questo l’Evangelio e i dottor magni
son derelitti, e solo ai Decretali
si studia, sì che pare a’ lor vivagni.

A questo intende il papa e’ cardinali;
non vanno i lor pensieri a Nazarette,
là dove Gabrïello aperse l’ali.

Ma Vaticano e l’altre parti elette
di Roma che son state cimitero
a la milizia che Pietro seguette,

tosto libere fien de l’avoltero».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto decimo

Canto X, nel quale santo Tommaso d'Aquino de l'ordine de' Frati Predicatori parla nel cielo del Sole; e qui comincia la quarta parte.

Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'Amore
che l'uno e l'altro etternalmente spira,
lo primo e ineffabile Valore 3

quanto per mente e per loco si gira
con tant' ordine fé, ch'esser non puote
sanza gustar di lui chi ciò rimira. 6

Leva dunque, lettore, a l'alte rote
meco la vista, dritto a quella parte
dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote; 9

e lì comincia a vagheggiar ne l'arte
di quel maestro che dentro a sé l'ama,
tanto che mai da lei l'occhio non parte. 12

Vedi come da indi si dirama
l'oblico cerchio che i pianeti porta,
per sodisfare al mondo che li chiama. 15

Che se la strada lor non fosse torta,
molta virtù nel ciel sarebbe in vano,
e quasi ogne potenza qua giù morta; 18

e se dal dritto più o men lontano
fosse 'l partire, assai sarebbe manco
e giù e sù de l'ordine mondano. 21

Or ti riman, lettor, sovra 'l tuo banco,
dietro pensando a ciò che si preliba,
s'esser vuoi lieto assai prima che stanco. 24

Messo t'ho innanzi: omai per te ti ciba;
ché a sé torce tutta la mia cura

quella materia ond’ io son fatto scriba.

Lo ministro maggior de la natura,
che del valor del ciel lo mondo imprenta
e col suo lume il tempo ne misura,

con quella parte che sù si rammenta
congiunto, si girava per le spire
in che più tosto ognora s’appresenta;

e io era con lui; ma del salire
non m’accors’ io, se non com’ uom s’accorge,
anzi ‘l primo pensier, del suo venire.

È Bëatrice quella che sì scorge
di bene in meglio, sì subitamente
che l’atto suo per tempo non si sporge.

Quant’ esser convenia da sé lucente
quel ch’era dentro al sol dov’ io entra’mi,
non per color, ma per lume parvente!

Perch’ io lo ‘ngegno e l’arte e l’uso chiami,
sì nol direi che mai s’imaginasse;
ma creder puossi e di veder si brami.

E se le fantasie nostre son basse
a tanta altezza, non è maraviglia;
ché sopra ‘l sol non fu occhio ch’andasse.

Tal era quivi la quarta famiglia
de l’alto Padre, che sempre la sazia,
mostrando come spira e come figlia.

E Bëatrice cominciò: «Ringrazia,
ringrazia il Sol de li angeli, ch’a questo
sensibil t’ha levato per sua grazia».

Cor di mortal non fu mai sì digesto
a divozione e a rendersi a Dio

con tutto ‘l suo gradir cotanto presto,

come a quelle parole mi fec’ io;
e sì tutto ‘l mio amore in lui si mise,
che Bëatrice eclissò ne l’oblio.

Non le dispiacque; ma sì se ne rise,
che lo splendor de li occhi suoi ridenti
mia mente unita in più cose divise.

Io vidi più folgór vivi e vincenti
far di noi centro e di sé far corona,
più dolci in voce che in vista lucenti:

così cinger la figlia di Latona
vedem talvolta, quando l’aere è pregno,
sì che ritenga il fil che fa la zona.

Ne la corte del cielo, ond’ io rivegno,
si trovan molte gioie care e belle
tanto che non si posson trar del regno;

e ‘l canto di quei lumi era di quelle;
chi non s’impenna sì che là sù voli,
dal muto aspetti quindi le novelle.

Poi, sì cantando, quelli ardenti soli
si fuor girati intorno a noi tre volte,
come stelle vicine a’ fermi poli,

donne mi parver, non da ballo sciolte,
ma che s’arrestin tacite, ascoltando
fin che le nove note hanno ricolte.

E dentro a l’un senti’ cominciar: «Quando
lo raggio de la grazia, onde s’accende
verace amore e che poi cresce amando,

multiplicato in te tanto resplende,
che ti conduce su per quella scala

u’ sanza risalir nessun discende;

qual ti negasse il vin de la sua fiala
per la tua sete, in libertà non fora
se non com’ acqua ch’al mar non si cala.

Tu vuo’ saper di quai piante s’infiora
questa ghirlanda che ‘ntorno vagheggia
la bella donna ch’al ciel t’avvalora.

Io fui de li agni de la santa greggia
che Domenico mena per cammino
u’ ben s’impingua se non si vaneggia.

Questi che m’è a destra più vicino,
frate e maestro fummi, ed esso Alberto
è di Cologna, e io Thomas d’Aquino.

Se sì di tutti li altri esser vuo’ certo,
di retro al mio parlar ten vien col viso
girando su per lo beato serto.

Quell’ altro fiammeggiare esce del riso
di Grazïan, che l’uno e l’altro foro
aiutò sì che piace in paradiso.

L’altro ch’appresso addorna il nostro coro,
quel Pietro fu che con la poverella
offerse a Santa Chiesa suo tesoro.

La quinta luce, ch’è tra noi più bella,
spira di tale amor, che tutto ‘l mondo
là giù ne gola di saper novella:

entro v’è l’alta mente u’ sì profondo
saver fu messo, che, se ‘l vero è vero,
a veder tanto non surse il secondo.

Appresso vedi il lume di quel cero
che giù in carne più a dentro vide

l’angelica natura e ‘l ministero.

Ne l’altra piccioletta luce ride
quello avvocato de’ tempi cristiani
del cui latino Augustin si provide.

Or se tu l’occhio de la mente trani
di luce in luce dietro a le mie lode,
già de l’ottava con sete rimani.

Per vedere ogne ben dentro vi gode
l’anima santa che ‘l mondo fallace
fa manifesto a chi di lei ben ode.

Lo corpo ond’ ella fu cacciata giace
giuso in Cieldauro; ed essa da martiro
e da essilio venne a questa pace.

Vedi oltre fiammeggiar l’ardente spiro
d’Isidoro, di Beda e di Riccardo,
che a considerar fu più che viro.

Questi onde a me ritorna il tuo riguardo,
è ‘l lume d’uno spirto che ‘n pensieri
gravi a morir li parve venir tardo:

essa è la luce etterna di Sigieri,
che, leggendo nel Vico de li Strami,
silogizzò invidïosi veri».

Indi, come orologio che ne chiami
ne l’ora che la sposa di Dio surge
a mattinar lo sposo perché l’ami,

che l’una parte e l’altra tira e urge,
tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota,
che ‘l ben disposto spirto d’amor turge;

così vid’ ïo la gloriosa rota
muoversi e render voce a voce in tempra

e in dolcezza ch’esser non pò nota 147

se non colà dove gioir s’insempra.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto undicesimo

Canto XI, nel quale il detto frate in gloria di san Francesco sotto brevitate racconta la sua vita tutta, e riprende i suoi frati, ché pochi sono quelli che ‘ seguitino.

O insensata cura de’ mortali,
quanto son difettivi silogismi
quei che ti fanno in basso batter l’ali!

Chi dietro a iura e chi ad amforismi
sen giva, e chi seguendo sacerdozio,
e chi regnar per forza o per sofismi,

e chi rubare e chi civil negozio,
chi nel diletto de la carne involto
s’affaticava e chi si dava a l’ozio,

quando, da tutte queste cose sciolto,
con Bëatrice m’era suso in cielo
cotanto glorïosamente accolto.

Poi che ciascuno fu tornato ne lo
punto del cerchio in che avanti s’era,
fermossi, come a candellier candelo.

E io senti’ dentro a quella lumera
che pria m’avea parlato, sorridendo
incominciar, faccendosi più mera:

«Così com’ io del suo raggio resplendo,
sì, riguardando ne la luce etterna,
li tuoi pensieri onde cagioni apprendo.

Tu dubbi, e hai voler che si ricerna
in sì aperta e ‘n sì distesa lingua
lo dicer mio, ch’al tuo sentir si sterna,

ove dinanzi dissi: “U’ ben s’impingua”,
e là u’ dissi: “Non nacque il secondo”;
e qui è uopo che ben si distingua.

La provedenza, che governa il mondo
con quel consiglio nel quale ogne aspetto
creato è vinto pria che vada al fondo,

però che andasse ver’ lo suo diletto
la sposa di colui ch’ad alte grida
disposò lei col sangue benedetto,

in sé sicura e anche a lui più fida,
due principi ordinò in suo favore,
che quinci e quindi le fosser per guida.

L’un fu tutto serafico in ardore;
l’altro per sapïenza in terra fue
di cherubica luce uno splendore.

De l’un dirò, però che d’amendue
si dice l’un pregiando, qual ch’om prende,
perch’ ad un fine fur l’opere sue.

Intra Tupino e l’acqua che discende
del colle eletto dal beato Ubaldo,
fertile costa d’alto monte pende,

onde Perugia sente freddo e caldo
da Porta Sole; e di rietro le piange
per grave giogo Nocera con Gualdo.

Di questa costa, là dov’ ella frange
più sua rattezza, nacque al mondo un sole,
come fa questo talvolta di Gange.

Però chi d’esso loco fa parole,
non dica Ascesi, ché direbbe corto,
ma Orïente, se proprio dir vuole.

Non era ancor molto lontan da l’orto,
ch’el cominciò a far sentir la terra
de la sua gran virtute alcun conforto;

ché per tal donna, giovinetto, in guerra
del padre corse, a cui, come a la morte,
la porta del piacer nessun diserra;

e dinanzi a la sua spirital corte
et coram patre le si fece unito;
poscia di dì in dì l’amò più forte.

Questa, privata del primo marito,
millecent’ anni e più dispetta e scura
fino a costui si stette sanza invito;

né valse udir che la trovò sicura
con Amiclate, al suon de la sua voce,
colui ch’a tutto ‘l mondo fé paura;

né valse esser costante né feroce,
sì che, dove Maria rimase giuso,
ella con Cristo pianse in su la croce.

Ma perch’ io non proceda troppo chiuso,
Francesco e Povertà per questi amanti
prendi oramai nel mio parlar diffuso.

La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembianti,
amore e maraviglia e dolce sguardo
facieno esser cagion di pensier santi;

tanto che ‘l venerabile Bernardo
si scalzò prima, e dietro a tanta pace
corse e, correndo, li parve esser tardo.

Oh ignota ricchezza! oh ben ferace!
Scalzasi Egidio, scalzasi Silvestro
dietro a lo sposo, sì la sposa piace.

Indi sen va quel padre e quel maestro
con la sua donna e con quella famiglia
che già legava l’umile capestro. 87

Né li gravò viltà di cuor le ciglia
per esser fi’ di Pietro Bernardone,
né per parer dispetto a maraviglia; 90

ma regalmente sua dura intenzione
ad Innocenzio aperse, e da lui ebbe
primo sigillo a sua religïone. 93

Poi che la gente poverella crebbe
dietro a costui, la cui mirabil vita
meglio in gloria del ciel si canterebbe, 96

di seconda corona redimita
fu per Onorio da l’Etterno Spiro
la santa voglia d’esto archimandrita. 99

E poi che, per la sete del martiro,
ne la presenza del Soldan superba
predicò Cristo e li altri che ‘l seguiro, 102

e per trovare a conversione acerba
troppo la gente e per non stare indarno,
redissi al frutto de l’italica erba, 105

nel crudo sasso intra Tevero e Arno
da Cristo prese l’ultimo sigillo,
che le sue membra due anni portarno. 108

Quando a colui ch’a tanto ben sortillo
piacque di trarlo suso a la mercede
ch’el meritò nel suo farsi pusillo, 111

a’ frati suoi, sì com’ a giuste rede,
raccomandò la donna sua più cara,
e comandò che l’amassero a fede; 114

e del suo grembo l’anima preclara
mover si volle, tornando al suo regno,
e al suo corpo non volle altra bara.

Pensa oramai qual fu colui che degno
collega fu a mantener la barca
di Pietro in alto mar per dritto segno;

e questo fu il nostro patrïarca;
per che qual segue lui, com’ el comanda,
discerner puoi che buone merce carca.

Ma ‘l suo pecuglio di nova vivanda
è fatto ghiotto, sì ch’esser non puote
che per diversi salti non si spanda;

e quanto le sue pecore remote
e vagabunde più da esso vanno,
più tornano a l’ovil di latte vòte.

Ben son di quelle che temono ‘l danno
e stringonsi al pastor; ma son sì poche,
che le cappe fornisce poco panno.

Or, se le mie parole non son fioche,
se la tua audïenza è stata attenta,
se ciò ch’è detto a la mente revoche,

in parte fia la tua voglia contenta,
perché vedrai la pianta onde si scheggia,
e vedra’ il corrègger che argomenta

“U’ ben s’impingua, se non si vaneggia”».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto dodicesimo

Canto XII, nel quale frate Bonaventura da Bagnoregio in gloria di santo Dominico parla e brevemente la sua vita narra.

Sì tosto come l’ultima parola
la benedetta fiamma per dir tolse,
a rotar cominciò la santa mola;

e nel suo giro tutta non si volse
prima ch’un’altra di cerchio la chiuse,
e moto a moto e canto a canto colse;

canto che tanto vince nostre muse,
nostre serene in quelle dolci tube,
quanto primo splendor quel ch’e’ refuse.

Come si volgon per tenera nube
due archi paralelli e concolori,
quando Iunone a sua ancella iube,

nascendo di quel d’entro quel di fori,
a guisa del parlar di quella vaga
ch’amor consunse come sol vapori,

e fanno qui la gente esser presaga,
per lo patto che Dio con Noè puose,
del mondo che già mai più non s’allaga:

così di quelle sempiterne rose
volgiensi circa noi le due ghirlande,
e sì l’estrema a l’intima rispuose.

Poi che ‘l tripudio e l’altra festa grande,
sì del cantare e sì del fiammeggiarsi
luce con luce gaudïose e blande,

insieme a punto e a voler quetarsi,
pur come li occhi ch’al piacer che i move

conviene insieme chiudere e levarsi;

del cor de l’una de le luci nove
si mosse voce, che l’ago a la stella
parer mi fece in volgermi al suo dove;

e cominciò: «L’amor che mi fa bella
mi tragge a ragionar de l’altro duca
per cui del mio sì ben ci si favella.

Degno è che, dov’ è l’un, l’altro s’induca:
sì che, com’ elli ad una militaro,
così la gloria loro insieme luca.

L’essercito di Cristo, che sì caro
costò a rïarmar, dietro a la ‘nsegna
si movea tardo, sospeccioso e raro,

quando lo ‘mperador che sempre regna
provide a la milizia, ch’era in forse,
per sola grazia, non per esser degna;

e, come è detto, a sua sposa soccorse
con due campioni, al cui fare, al cui dire
lo popol disvïato si raccorse.

In quella parte ove surge ad aprire
Zefiro dolce le novelle fronde
di che si vede Europa rivestire,

non molto lungi al percuoter de l’onde
dietro a le quali, per la lunga foga,
lo sol talvolta ad ogne uom si nasconde,

siede la fortunata Calaroga
sotto la protezion del grande scudo
in che soggiace il leone e soggioga:

dentro vi nacque l’amoroso drudo
de la fede cristiana, il santo atleta

benigno a’ suoi e a’ nemici crudo;

e come fu creata, fu repleta
sì la sua mente di viva vertute,
che, ne la madre, lei fece profeta.

Poi che le sponsalizie fuor compiute
al sacro fonte intra lui e la Fede,
u’ si dotar di mutüa salute,

la donna che per lui l’assenso diede,
vide nel sonno il mirabile frutto
ch’uscir dovea di lui e de le rede;

e perché fosse qual era in costrutto,
quinci si mosse spirito a nomarlo
del possessivo di cui era tutto.

Domenico fu detto; e io ne parlo
sì come de l’agricola che Cristo
elesse a l’orto suo per aiutarlo.

Ben parve messo e famigliar di Cristo:
ché ‘l primo amor che ‘n lui fu manifesto,
fu al primo consiglio che diè Cristo.

Spesse fïate fu tacito e desto
trovato in terra da la sua nutrice,
come dicesse: ‘Io son venuto a questo’.

Oh padre suo veramente Felice!
oh madre sua veramente Giovanna,
se, interpretata, val come si dice!

Non per lo mondo, per cui mo s’affanna
di retro ad Ostïense e a Taddeo,
ma per amor de la verace manna

in picciol tempo gran dottor si feo;
tal che si mise a circüir la vigna

che tosto imbianca, se ‘l vignaio è reo.

E a la sedia che fu già benigna
più a’ poveri giusti, non per lei,
ma per colui che siede, che traligna,

non dispensare o due o tre per sei,
non la fortuna di prima vacante,
non decimas, quae sunt pauperum Dei,

addimandò, ma contro al mondo errante
licenza di combatter per lo seme
del qual ti fascian ventiquattro piante.

Poi, con dottrina e con volere insieme,
con l’officio appostolico si mosse
quasi torrente ch’alta vena preme;

e ne li sterpi eretici percosse
l’impeto suo, più vivamente quivi
dove le resistenze eran più grosse.

Di lui si fecer poi diversi rivi
onde l’orto catolico si riga,
sì che i suoi arbuscelli stan più vivi.

Se tal fu l’una rota de la biga
in che la Santa Chiesa si difese
e vinse in campo la sua civil briga,

ben ti dovrebbe assai esser palese
l’eccellenza de l’altra, di cui Tomma
dinanzi al mio venir fu sì cortese.

Ma l’orbita che fé la parte somma
di sua circunferenza, è derelitta,
sì ch’è la muffa dov’ era la gromma.

La sua famiglia, che si mosse dritta
coi piedi a le sue orme, è tanto volta,

che quel dinanzi a quel di retro gitta;

e tosto si vedrà de la ricolta
de la mala coltura, quando il loglio
si lagnerà che l'arca li sia tolta.

Ben dico, chi cercasse a foglio a foglio
nostro volume, ancor troveria carta
u' leggerebbe "I' mi son quel ch'i' soglio";

ma non fia da Casal né d'Acquasparta,
là onde vegnon tali a la scrittura,
ch'uno la fugge e altro la coarta.

Io son la vita di Bonaventura
da Bagnoregio, che ne' grandi offici
sempre pospuosi la sinistra cura.

Illuminato e Augustin son quici,
che fuor de' primi scalzi poverelli
che nel capestro a Dio si fero amici.

Ugo da San Vittore è qui con elli,
e Pietro Mangiadore e Pietro Spano,
lo qual giù luce in dodici libelli;

Natàn profeta e 'l metropolitano
Crisostomo e Anselmo e quel Donato
ch'a la prim' arte degnò porre mano.

Rabano è qui, e lucemi dallato
il calavrese abate Giovacchino
di spirito profetico dotato.

Ad inveggiar cotanto paladino
mi mosse l'infiammata cortesia
di fra Tommaso e 'l discreto latino;

e mosse meco questa compagnia».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto tredicesimo

Canto XIII, nel quale san Tommaso d'Aquino, de l'ordine d'i frati predicatori solve una questione toccata di sopra da Salamone.

Imagini, chi bene intender cupe
quel ch'i' or vidi - e ritegna l'image,
mentre ch'io dico, come ferma rupe -,

quindici stelle che 'n diverse plage
lo ciel avvivan di tanto sereno
che soperchia de l'aere ogne compage;

imagini quel carro a cu' il seno
basta del nostro cielo e notte e giorno,
sì ch'al volger del temo non vien meno;

imagini la bocca di quel corno
che si comincia in punta de lo stelo
a cui la prima rota va dintorno,

aver fatto di sé due segni in cielo,
qual fece la figliuola di Minoi
allora che sentì di morte il gelo;

e l'un ne l'altro aver li raggi suoi,
e amendue girarsi per maniera
che l'uno andasse al primo e l'altro al poi;

e avrà quasi l'ombra de la vera
costellazione e de la doppia danza
che circulava il punto dov' io era:

poi ch'è tanto di là da nostra usanza,
quanto di là dal mover de la Chiana
si move il ciel che tutti li altri avanza.

Lì si cantò non Bacco, non Peana,
ma tre persone in divina natura,

e in una persona essa e l’umana.

Compié ‘l cantare e ‘l volger sua misura;
e attesersi a noi quei santi lumi,
felicitando sé di cura in cura.

Ruppe il silenzio ne’ concordi numi
poscia la luce in che mirabil vita
del poverel di Dio narrata fumi,

e disse: «Quando l’una paglia è trita,
quando la sua semenza è già riposta,
a batter l’altra dolce amor m’invita.

Tu credi che nel petto onde la costa
si trasse per formar la bella guancia
il cui palato a tutto ‘l mondo costa,

e in quel che, forato da la lancia,
e prima e poscia tanto sodisfece,
che d’ogne colpa vince la bilancia,

quantunque a la natura umana lece
aver di lume, tutto fosse infuso
da quel valor che l’uno e l’altro fece;

e però miri a ciò ch’io dissi suso,
quando narrai che non ebbe ‘l secondo
lo ben che ne la quinta luce è chiuso.

Or apri li occhi a quel ch’io ti rispondo,
e vedräi il tuo credere e ‘l mio dire
nel vero farsi come centro in tondo.

Ciò che non more e ciò che può morire
non è se non splendor di quella idea
che partorisce, amando, il nostro Sire;

ché quella viva luce che sì mea
dal suo lucente, che non si disuna

da lui né da l’amor ch’a lor s’intrea,

per sua bontate il suo raggiare aduna,
quasi specchiato, in nove sussistenze,
etternalmente rimanendosi una.

Quindi discende a l’ultime potenze
giù d’atto in atto, tanto divenendo,
che più non fa che brevi contingenze;

e queste contingenze essere intendo
le cose generate, che produce
con seme e sanza seme il ciel movendo.

La cera di costoro e chi la duce
non sta d’un modo; e però sotto ‘l segno
idëale poi più e men traluce.

Ond’ elli avvien ch’un medesimo legno,
secondo specie, meglio e peggio frutta;
e voi nascete con diverso ingegno.

Se fosse a punto la cera dedutta
e fosse il cielo in sua virtù supprema,
la luce del suggel parrebbe tutta;

ma la natura la dà sempre scema,
similemente operando a l’artista
ch’a l’abito de l’arte ha man che trema.

Però se ‘l caldo amor la chiara vista
de la prima virtù dispone e segna,
tutta la perfezion quivi s’acquista.

Così fu fatta già la terra degna
di tutta l’animal perfezïone;
così fu fatta la Vergine pregna;

sì ch’io commendo tua oppinïone,
che l’umana natura mai non fue

né fia qual fu in quelle due persone.

Or s’i’ non procedesse avanti piùe,
‘Dunque, come costui fu sanza pare?’
comincerebber le parole tue.

Ma perché paia ben ciò che non pare,
pensa chi era, e la cagion che ‘l mosse,
quando fu detto “Chiedi”, a dimandare.

Non ho parlato sì, che tu non posse
ben veder ch’el fu re, che chiese senno
acciò che re sufficïente fosse;

non per sapere il numero in che enno
li motor di qua sù, o se necesse
con contingente mai necesse fenno;

non si est dare primum motum esse,
o se del mezzo cerchio far si puote
trïangol sì ch’un retto non avesse.

Onde, se ciò ch’io dissi e questo note,
regal prudenza è quel vedere impari
in che lo stral di mia intenzion percuote;

e se al “surse” drizzi li occhi chiari,
vedrai aver solamente respetto
ai regi, che son molti, e ‘ buon son rari.

Con questa distinzion prendi ‘l mio detto;
e così puote star con quel che credi
del primo padre e del nostro Diletto.

E questo ti sia sempre piombo a’ piedi,
per farti mover lento com’ uom lasso
e al sì e al no che tu non vedi:

ché quelli è tra li stolti bene a basso,
che sanza distinzione afferma e nega

ne l’un così come ne l’altro passo;

perch’ elli ‘ncontra che più volte piega
l’oppinïon corrente in falsa parte,
e poi l’affetto l’intelletto lega.

Vie più che ‘ndarno da riva si parte,
perché non torna tal qual e’ si move,
chi pesca per lo vero e non ha l’arte.

E di ciò sono al mondo aperte prove
Parmenide, Melisso e Brisso e molti,
li quali andaro e non sapëan dove;

sì fé Sabellio e Arrio e quelli stolti
che furon come spade a le Scritture
in render torti li diritti volti.

Non sien le genti, ancor, troppo sicure
a giudicar, sì come quei che stima
le biade in campo pria che sien mature;

ch’i’ ho veduto tutto ‘l verno prima
lo prun mostrarsi rigido e feroce,
poscia portar la rosa in su la cima;

e legno vidi già dritto e veloce
correr lo mar per tutto suo cammino,
perire al fine a l’intrar de la foce.

Non creda donna Berta e ser Martino,
per vedere un furare, altro offerere,
vederli dentro al consiglio divino;

ché quel può surgere, e quel può cadere».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto quattordicesimo

Canto XIV, nel quale Salamone solve alcuna cosa dubitata; e montasi ne la stella di Marte. La quinta parte comincia qui.

Dal centro al cerchio, e sì dal cerchio al centro
movesi l’acqua in un ritondo vaso,
secondo ch’è percosso fuori o dentro:

ne la mia mente fé sùbito caso
questo ch’io dico, sì come si tacque
la glorïosa vita di Tommaso,

per la similitudine che nacque
del suo parlare e di quel di Beatrice,
a cui sì cominciar, dopo lui, piacque:

«A costui fa mestieri, e nol vi dice
né con la voce né pensando ancora,
d’un altro vero andare a la radice.

Diteli se la luce onde s’infiora
vostra sustanza, rimarrà con voi
etternalmente sì com’ ell’ è ora;

e se rimane, dite come, poi
che sarete visibili rifatti,
esser porà ch’al veder non vi nòi».

Come, da più letizia pinti e tratti,
a la fïata quei che vanno a rota
levan la voce e rallegrano li atti,

così, a l’orazion pronta e divota,
li santi cerchi mostrar nova gioia
nel torneare e ne la mira nota.

Qual si lamenta perché qui si moia
per viver colà sù, non vide quive

lo refrigerio de l’etterna ploia.

Quell’ uno e due e tre che sempre vive
e regna sempre in tre e ‘n due e ‘n uno,
non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive,

tre volte era cantato da ciascuno
di quelli spirti con tal melodia,
ch’ad ogne merto saria giusto muno.

E io udi’ ne la luce più dia
del minor cerchio una voce modesta,
forse qual fu da l’angelo a Maria,

risponder: «Quanto fia lunga la festa
di paradiso, tanto il nostro amore
si raggerà dintorno cotal vesta.

La sua chiarezza séguita l’ardore;
l’ardor la visïone, e quella è tanta,
quant’ ha di grazia sovra suo valore.

Come la carne glorïosa e santa
fia rivestita, la nostra persona
più grata fia per esser tutta quanta;

per che s’accrescerà ciò che ne dona
di gratüito lume il sommo bene,
lume ch’a lui veder ne condiziona;

onde la visïon crescer convene,
crescer l’ardor che di quella s’accende,
crescer lo raggio che da esso vene.

Ma sì come carbon che fiamma rende,
e per vivo candor quella soverchia,
sì che la sua parvenza si difende;

così questo folgór che già ne cerchia
fia vinto in apparenza da la carne

che tutto dì la terra ricoperchia;

né potrà tanta luce affaticarne:
ché li organi del corpo saran forti
a tutto ciò che potrà dilettarne».

Tanto mi parver sùbiti e accorti
e l'uno e l'altro coro a dicer «Amme!»,
che ben mostrar disio d'i corpi morti:

forse non pur per lor, ma per le mamme,
per li padri e per li altri che fuor cari
anzi che fosser sempiterne fiamme.

Ed ecco intorno, di chiarezza pari,
nascere un lustro sopra quel che v'era,
per guisa d'orizzonte che rischiari.

E sì come al salir di prima sera
comincian per lo ciel nove parvenze,
sì che la vista pare e non par vera,

parvemi lì novelle sussistenze
cominciare a vedere, e fare un giro
di fuor da l'altre due circunferenze.

Oh vero sfavillar del Santo Spiro!
come si fece sùbito e candente
a li occhi miei che, vinti, nol soffriro!

Ma Bëatrice sì bella e ridente
mi si mostrò, che tra quelle vedute
si vuol lasciar che non seguir la mente.

Quindi ripreser li occhi miei virtute
a rilevarsi; e vidimi translato
sol con mia donna in più alta salute.

Ben m'accors' io ch'io era più levato,
per l'affocato riso de la stella,

che mi parea più roggio che l’usato.

Con tutto ‘l core e con quella favella
ch’è una in tutti, a Dio feci olocausto,
qual conveniesi a la grazia novella.

E non er’ anco del mio petto essausto
l’ardor del sacrificio, ch’io conobbi
esso litare stato accetto e fausto;

ché con tanto lucore e tanto robbi
m’apparvero splendor dentro a due raggi,
ch’io dissi: «O Elïòs che sì li addobbi!».

Come distinta da minori e maggi
lumi biancheggia tra ‘ poli del mondo
Galassia sì, che fa dubbiar ben saggi;

sì costellati facean nel profondo
Marte quei raggi il venerabil segno
che fan giunture di quadranti in tondo.

Qui vince la memoria mia lo ‘ngegno;
ché quella croce lampeggiava Cristo,
sì ch’io non so trovare essempro degno;

ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo,
ancor mi scuserà di quel ch’io lasso,
vedendo in quell’ albor balenar Cristo.

Di corno in corno e tra la cima e ‘l basso
si movien lumi, scintillando forte
nel congiugnersi insieme e nel trapasso:

così si veggion qui diritte e torte,
veloci e tarde, rinovando vista,
le minuzie d’i corpi, lunghe e corte,

moversi per lo raggio onde si lista
talvolta l’ombra che, per sua difesa,

la gente con ingegno e arte acquista.

E come giga e arpa, in tempra tesa
di molte corde, fa dolce tintinno
a tal da cui la nota non è intesa,

così da' lumi che lì m'apparinno
s'accogliea per la croce una melode
che mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno.

Ben m'accors' io ch'elli era d'alte lode,
però ch'a me venìa «Resurgi» e «Vinci»
come a colui che non intende e ode.

Ïo m'innamorava tanto quinci,
che 'nfino a lì non fu alcuna cosa
che mi legasse con sì dolci vinci.

Forse la mia parola par troppo osa,
posponendo il piacer de li occhi belli,
ne' quai mirando mio disio ha posa;

ma chi s'avvede che i vivi suggelli
d'ogne bellezza più fanno più suso,
e ch'io non m'era lì rivolto a quelli,

escusar puommi di quel ch'io m'accuso
per escusarmi, e vedermi dir vero:
ché 'l piacer santo non è qui dischiuso,

perché si fa, montando, più sincero.

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto quindicesimo

Canto XV, nel quale messere Cacciaguida fiorentino parla laudando l'antico costume di Fiorenza, in vituperio del presente vivere d'essa cittade di Fiorenza.

Benigna volontade in che si liqua
sempre l'amor che drittamente spira,
come cupidità fa ne la iniqua,

silenzio puose a quella dolce lira,
e fece quïetar le sante corde
che la destra del cielo allenta e tira.

Come saranno a' giusti preghi sorde
quelle sustanze che, per darmi voglia
ch'io le pregassi, a tacer fur concorde?

Bene è che sanza termine si doglia
chi, per amor di cosa che non duri
etternalmente, quello amor si spoglia.

Quale per li seren tranquilli e puri
discorre ad ora ad or sùbito foco,
movendo li occhi che stavan sicuri,

e pare stella che tramuti loco,
se non che da la parte ond' e' s'accende
nulla sen perde, ed esso dura poco:

tale dal corno che 'n destro si stende
a piè di quella croce corse un astro
de la costellazion che lì resplende;

né si partì la gemma dal suo nastro,
ma per la lista radïal trascorse,
che parve foco dietro ad alabastro.

Sì pïa l'ombra d'Anchise si porse,
se fede merta nostra maggior musa,

quando in Eliso del figlio s’accorse.

«O sanguis meus, o superinfusa
gratïa Deï, sicut tibi cui
bis unquam celi ianüa reclusa?».

Così quel lume: ond’ io m’attesi a lui;
poscia rivolsi a la mia donna il viso,
e quinci e quindi stupefatto fui;

ché dentro a li occhi suoi ardeva un riso
tal, ch’io pensai co’ miei toccar lo fondo
de la mia gloria e del mio paradiso.

Indi, a udire e a veder giocondo,
giunse lo spirto al suo principio cose,
ch’io non lo ‘ntesi, sì parlò profondo;

né per elezïon mi si nascose,
ma per necessità, ché ‘l suo concetto
al segno d’i mortal si soprapuose.

E quando l’arco de l’ardente affetto
fu sì sfogato, che ‘l parlar discese
inver’ lo segno del nostro intelletto,

la prima cosa che per me s’intese,
«Benedetto sia tu», fu, «trino e uno,
che nel mio seme se’ tanto cortese!».

E seguì: «Grato e lontano digiuno,
tratto leggendo del magno volume
du’ non si muta mai bianco né bruno,

solvuto hai, figlio, dentro a questo lume
in ch’io ti parlo, mercé di colei
ch’a l’alto volo ti vestì le piume.

Tu credi che a me tuo pensier mei
da quel ch’è primo, così come raia

da l’un, se si conosce, il cinque e ‘l sei;

e però ch’io mi sia e perch’ io paia
più gaudïoso a te, non mi domandi,
che alcun altro in questa turba gaia.

Tu credi ‘l vero; ché i minori e ‘ grandi
di questa vita miran ne lo speglio
in che, prima che pensi, il pensier pandi;

ma perché ‘l sacro amore in che io veglio
con perpetüa vista e che m’asseta
di dolce disïar, s’adempia meglio,

la voce tua sicura, balda e lieta
suoni la volontà, suoni ‘l disio,
a che la mia risposta è già decreta!».

Io mi volsi a Beatrice, e quella udio
pria ch’io parlassi, e arrisemi un cenno
che fece crescer l’ali al voler mio.

Poi cominciai così: «L’affetto e ‘l senno,
come la prima equalità v’apparse,
d’un peso per ciascun di voi si fenno,

però che ‘l sol che v’allumò e arse,
col caldo e con la luce è sì iguali,
che tutte simiglianze sono scarse.

Ma voglia e argomento ne’ mortali,
per la cagion ch’a voi è manifesta,
diversamente son pennuti in ali;

ond’ io, che son mortal, mi sento in questa
disagguaglianza, e però non ringrazio
se non col core a la paterna festa.

Ben supplico io a te, vivo topazio
che questa gioia prezïosa ingemmi,

perché mi facci del tuo nome sazio». 87

«O fronda mia in che io compiacemmi
pur aspettando, io fui la tua radice»:
cotal principio, rispondendo, femmi. 90

Poscia mi disse: «Quel da cui si dice
tua cognazione e che cent' anni e piùe
girato ha 'l monte in la prima cornice, 93

mio figlio fu e tuo bisavol fue:
ben si convien che la lunga fatica
tu li raccorci con l'opere tue. 96

Fiorenza dentro da la cerchia antica,
ond' ella toglie ancora e terza e nona,
si stava in pace, sobria e pudica. 99

Non avea catenella, non corona,
non gonne contigiate, non cintura
che fosse a veder più che la persona. 102

Non faceva, nascendo, ancor paura
la figlia al padre, ché 'l tempo e la dote
non fuggien quinci e quindi la misura. 105

Non avea case di famiglia vòte;
non v'era giunto ancor Sardanapalo
a mostrar ciò che 'n camera si puote. 108

Non era vinto ancora Montemalo
dal vostro Uccellatoio, che, com' è vinto
nel montar sù, così sarà nel calo. 111

Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto
di cuoio e d'osso, e venir da lo specchio
la donna sua sanza 'l viso dipinto; 114

e vidi quel d'i Nerli e quel del Vecchio
esser contenti a la pelle scoperta,

e le sue donne al fuso e al pennecchio.

Oh fortunate! ciascuna era certa
de la sua sepultura, e ancor nulla
era per Francia nel letto diserta.

L’una vegghiava a studio de la culla,
e, consolando, usava l’idïoma
che prima i padri e le madri trastulla;

l’altra, traendo a la rocca la chioma,
favoleggiava con la sua famiglia
d’i Troiani, di Fiesole e di Roma.

Saria tenuta allor tal maraviglia
una Cianghella, un Lapo Salterello,
qual or saria Cincinnato e Corniglia.

A così riposato, a così bello
viver di cittadini, a così fida
cittadinanza, a così dolce ostello,

Maria mi diè, chiamata in alte grida;
e ne l’antico vostro Batisteo
insieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida.

Moronto fu mio frate ed Eliseo;
mia donna venne a me di val di Pado,
e quindi il sopranome tuo si feo.

Poi seguitai lo ‘mperador Currado;
ed el mi cinse de la sua milizia,
tanto per bene ovrar li venni in grado.

Dietro li andai incontro a la nequizia
di quella legge il cui popolo usurpa,
per colpa d’i pastor, vostra giustizia.

Quivi fu’ io da quella gente turpa
disviluppato dal mondo fallace,

lo cui amor molt’ anime deturpa; 147

e venni dal martiro a questa pace».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto sedicesimo

Canto XVI, nel quale il sopradetto messer Cacciaguida racconta intorno di quaranta famiglie onorabili al suo tempo ne la cittade di Fiorenza, de le quali al presente non è ricordo né fama.

O poca nostra nobiltà di sangue,
se glorïar di te la gente fai
qua giù dove l’affetto nostro langue,

mirabil cosa non mi sarà mai:
ché là dove appetito non si torce,
dico nel cielo, io me ne gloriai.

Ben se’ tu manto che tosto raccorce:
sì che, se non s’appon di dì in die,
lo tempo va dintorno con le force.

Dal ‘voi’ che prima a Roma s’offerie,
in che la sua famiglia men persevra,
ricominciaron le parole mie;

onde Beatrice, ch’era un poco scevra,
ridendo, parve quella che tossio
al primo fallo scritto di Ginevra.

Io cominciai: «Voi siete il padre mio;
voi mi date a parlar tutta baldezza;
voi mi levate sì, ch’i’ son più ch’io.

Per tanti rivi s’empie d’allegrezza
la mente mia, che di sé fa letizia
perché può sostener che non si spezza.

Ditemi dunque, cara mia primizia,
quai fuor li vostri antichi e quai fuor li anni
che si segnaro in vostra püerizia;

ditemi de l’ovil di San Giovanni
quanto era allora, e chi eran le genti
tra esso degne di più alti scanni». 27

Come s’avviva a lo spirar d’i venti
carbone in fiamma, così vid’ io quella
luce risplendere a’ miei blandimenti; 30

e come a li occhi miei si fé più bella,
così con voce più dolce e soave,
ma non con questa moderna favella, 33

dissemi: «Da quel dì che fu detto ‘Ave’
al parto in che mia madre, ch’è or santa,
s’alleviò di me ond’ era grave, 36

al suo Leon cinquecento cinquanta
e trenta fiate venne questo foco
a rinfiammarsi sotto la sua pianta. 39

Li antichi miei e io nacqui nel loco
dove si truova pria l’ultimo sesto
da quei che corre il vostro annüal gioco. 42

Basti d’i miei maggiori udirne questo:
chi ei si fosser e onde venner quivi,
più è tacer che ragionare onesto. 45

Tutti color ch’a quel tempo eran ivi
da poter arme tra Marte e ‘l Batista,
eran il quinto di quei ch’or son vivi. 48

Ma la cittadinanza, ch’è or mista
di Campi, di Certaldo e di Fegghine,
pura vediesi ne l’ultimo artista. 51

Oh quanto fora meglio esser vicine
quelle genti ch’io dico, e al Galluzzo
e a Trespiano aver vostro confine, 54

che averle dentro e sostener lo puzzo
del villan d’Aguglion, di quel da Signa,
che già per barattare ha l’occhio aguzzo!

Se la gente ch’al mondo più traligna
non fosse stata a Cesare noverca,
ma come madre a suo figlio benigna,

tal fatto è fiorentino e cambia e merca,
che si sarebbe vòlto a Simifonti,
là dove andava l’avolo a la cerca;

sariesi Montemurlo ancor de’ Conti;
sarieno i Cerchi nel piovier d’Acone,
e forse in Valdigrieve i Buondelmonti.

Sempre la confusion de le persone
principio fu del mal de la cittade,
come del vostro il cibo che s’appone;

e cieco toro più avaccio cade
che cieco agnello; e molte volte taglia
più e meglio una che le cinque spade.

Se tu riguardi Luni e Orbisaglia
come sono ite, e come se ne vanno
di retro ad esse Chiusi e Sinigaglia,

udir come le schiatte si disfanno
non ti parrà nova cosa né forte,
poscia che le cittadi termine hanno.

Le vostre cose tutte hanno lor morte,
sì come voi; ma celasi in alcuna
che dura molto, e le vite son corte.

E come ‘l volger del ciel de la luna
cuopre e discuopre i liti sanza posa,
così fa di Fiorenza la Fortuna:

per che non dee parer mirabil cosa
ciò ch'io dirò de li alti Fiorentini
onde è la fama nel tempo nascosa. 87

Io vidi li Ughi e vidi i Catellini,
Filippi, Greci, Ormanni e Alberichi,
già nel calare, illustri cittadini; 90

e vidi così grandi come antichi,
con quel de la Sannella, quel de l'Arca,
e Soldanieri e Ardinghi e Bostichi. 93

Sovra la porta ch'al presente è carca
di nova fellonia di tanto peso
che tosto fia iattura de la barca, 96

erano i Ravignani, ond' è disceso
il conte Guido e qualunque del nome
de l'alto Bellincione ha poscia preso. 99

Quel de la Pressa sapeva già come
regger si vuole, e avea Galigaio
dorata in casa sua già l'elsa e 'l pome. 102

Grand' era già la colonna del Vaio,
Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifanti e Barucci
e Galli e quei ch'arrossan per lo staio. 105

Lo ceppo di che nacquero i Calfucci
era già grande, e già eran tratti
a le curule Sizii e Arrigucci. 108

Oh quali io vidi quei che son disfatti
per lor superbia! e le palle de l'oro
fiorian Fiorenza in tutt' i suoi gran fatti. 111

Così facieno i padri di coloro
che, sempre che la vostra chiesa vaca,
si fanno grassi stando a consistoro. 114

L’oltracotata schiatta che s’indraca
dietro a chi fugge, e a chi mostra ‘l dente
o ver la borsa, com’ agnel si placa,

già venìa sù, ma di picciola gente;
sì che non piacque ad Ubertin Donato
che poï il suocero il fé lor parente.

Già era ‘l Caponsacco nel mercato
disceso giù da Fiesole, e già era
buon cittadino Giuda e Infangato.

Io dirò cosa incredibile e vera:
nel picciol cerchio s’entrava per porta
che si nomava da quei de la Pera.

Ciascun che de la bella insegna porta
del gran barone il cui nome e ‘l cui pregio
la festa di Tommaso riconforta,

da esso ebbe milizia e privilegio;
avvegna che con popol si rauni
oggi colui che la fascia col fregio.

Già eran Gualterotti e Importuni;
e ancor saria Borgo più quïeto,
se di novi vicin fosser digiuni.

La casa di che nacque il vostro fleto,
per lo giusto disdegno che v’ha morti
e puose fine al vostro viver lieto,

era onorata, essa e suoi consorti:
o Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti
le nozze süe per li altrui conforti!

Molti sarebber lieti, che son tristi,
se Dio t’avesse conceduto ad Ema
la prima volta ch’a città venisti.

Ma conveniesi, a quella pietra scema
che guarda ‘l ponte, che Fiorenza fesse
vittima ne la sua pace postrema.

Con queste genti, e con altre con esse,
vid’ io Fiorenza in sì fatto riposo,
che non avea cagione onde piangesse.

Con queste genti vid’ io glorïoso
e giusto il popol suo, tanto che ‘l giglio
non era ad asta mai posto a ritroso,

né per divisïon fatto vermiglio».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciassettesimo

Canto XVII, nel quale il predetto messer Cacciaguida solve l'animo de l'auttore da una paura e confortalo a fare questa opera.

Qual venne a Climenè, per accertarsi
di ciò ch'avëa incontro a sé udito,
quei ch'ancor fa li padri ai figli scarsi;

tal era io, e tal era sentito
e da Beatrice e da la santa lampa
che pria per me avea mutato sito.

Per che mia donna «Manda fuor la vampa
del tuo disio», mi disse, «sì ch'ella esca
segnata bene de la interna stampa:

non perché nostra conoscenza cresca
per tuo parlare, ma perché t'ausi
a dir la sete, sì che l'uom ti mesca».

«O cara piota mia che sì t'insusi,
che, come veggion le terrene menti
non capere in trïangol due ottusi,

così vedi le cose contingenti
anzi che sieno in sé, mirando il punto
a cui tutti li tempi son presenti;

mentre ch'io era a Virgilio congiunto
su per lo monte che l'anime cura
e discendendo nel mondo defunto,

dette mi fuor di mia vita futura
parole gravi, avvegna ch'io mi senta
ben tetragono ai colpi di ventura;

per che la voglia mia saria contenta
d'intender qual fortuna mi s'appressa:

ché saetta previsa vien più lenta». 27

Così diss’ io a quella luce stessa
che pria m’avea parlato; e come volle
Beatrice, fu la mia voglia confessa. 30

Né per ambage, in che la gente folle
già s’inviscava pria che fosse anciso
l’Agnel di Dio che le peccata tolle, 33

ma per chiare parole e con preciso
latin rispuose quello amor paterno,
chiuso e parvente del suo proprio riso: 36

«La contingenza, che fuor del quaderno
de la vostra matera non si stende,
tutta è dipinta nel cospetto etterno; 39

necessità però quindi non prende
se non come dal viso in che si specchia
nave che per torrente giù discende. 42

Da indi, sì come viene ad orecchia
dolce armonia da organo, mi viene
a vista il tempo che ti s’apparecchia. 45

Qual si partio Ipolito d’Atene
per la spietata e perfida noverca,
tal di Fiorenza partir ti convene. 48

Questo si vuole e questo già si cerca,
e tosto verrà fatto a chi ciò pensa
là dove Cristo tutto dì si merca. 51

La colpa seguirà la parte offensa
in grido, come suol; ma la vendetta
fia testimonio al ver che la dispensa. 54

Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta
più caramente; e questo è quello strale

che l’arco de lo essilio pria saetta.

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
lo scendere e ‘l salir per l’altrui scale.

E quel che più ti graverà le spalle,
sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia
con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle;

che tutta ingrata, tutta matta ed empia
si farà contr’ a te; ma, poco appresso,
ella, non tu, n’avrà rossa la tempia.

Di sua bestialitate il suo processo
farà la prova; sì ch’a te fia bello
averti fatta parte per te stesso.

Lo primo tuo refugio e ‘l primo ostello
sarà la cortesia del gran Lombardo
che ‘n su la scala porta il santo uccello;

ch’in te avrà sì benigno riguardo,
che del fare e del chieder, tra voi due,
fia primo quel che tra li altri è più tardo.

Con lui vedrai colui che ‘mpresso fue,
nascendo, sì da questa stella forte,
che notabili fier l’opere sue.

Non se ne son le genti ancora accorte
per la novella età, ché pur nove anni
son queste rote intorno di lui torte;

ma pria che ‘l Guasco l’alto Arrigo inganni,
parran faville de la sua virtute
in non curar d’argento né d’affanni.

Le sue magnificenze conosciute
saranno ancora, sì che ‘ suoi nemici

non ne potran tener le lingue mute.

A lui t’aspetta e a’ suoi benefici;
per lui fia trasmutata molta gente,
cambiando condizion ricchi e mendici;

e portera’ne scritto ne la mente
di lui, e nol dirai»; e disse cose
incredibili a quei che fier presente.

Poi giunse: «Figlio, queste son le chiose
di quel che ti fu detto; ecco le ‘nsidie
che dietro a pochi giri son nascose.

Non vo’ però ch’a’ tuoi vicini invidie,
poscia che s’infutura la tua vita
vie più là che ‘l punir di lor perfidie».

Poi che, tacendo, si mostrò spedita
l’anima santa di metter la trama
in quella tela ch’io le porsi ordita,

io cominciai, come colui che brama,
dubitando, consiglio da persona
che vede e vuol dirittamente e ama:

«Ben veggio, padre mio, sì come sprona
lo tempo verso me, per colpo darmi
tal, ch’è più grave a chi più s’abbandona;

per che di provedenza è buon ch’io m’armi,
sì che, se loco m’è tolto più caro,
io non perdessi li altri per miei carmi.

Giù per lo mondo sanza fine amaro,
e per lo monte del cui bel cacume
li occhi de la mia donna mi levaro,

e poscia per lo ciel, di lume in lume,
ho io appreso quel che s’io ridico,

a molti fia sapor di forte agrume;

e s’io al vero son timido amico,
temo di perder viver tra coloro
che questo tempo chiameranno antico».

La luce in che rideva il mio tesoro
ch’io trovai lì, si fé prima corusca,
quale a raggio di sole specchio d’oro;

indi rispuose: «Coscïenza fusca
o de la propria o de l’altrui vergogna
pur sentirà la tua parola brusca.

Ma nondimen, rimossa ogne menzogna,
tutta tua visïon fa manifesta;
e lascia pur grattar dov’ è la rogna.

Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta
nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento
lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta.

Questo tuo grido farà come vento,
che le più alte cime più percuote;
e ciò non fa d’onor poco argomento.

Però ti son mostrate in queste rote,
nel monte e ne la valle dolorosa
pur l’anime che son di fama note,

che l’animo di quel ch’ode, non posa
né ferma fede per essempro ch’aia
la sua radice incognita e ascosa,

né per altro argomento che non paia».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto diciottesimo

Canto XVIII, nel quale si monta ne la stella di Giove, e narrasi come li luminari spirituali figuravano mirabilmente.

Già si godeva solo del suo verbo
quello specchio beato, e io gustava
lo mio, temprando col dolce l'acerbo;

e quella donna ch'a Dio mi menava
disse: «Muta pensier; pensa ch'i' sono
presso a colui ch'ogne torto disgrava».

Io mi rivolsi a l'amoroso suono
del mio conforto; e qual io allor vidi
ne li occhi santi amor, qui l'abbandono:

non perch' io pur del mio parlar diffidi,
ma per la mente che non può redire
sovra sé tanto, s'altri non la guidi.

Tanto poss' io di quel punto ridire,
che, rimirando lei, lo mio affetto
libero fu da ogne altro disire,

fin che 'l piacere etterno, che diretto
raggiava in Bëatrice, dal bel viso
mi contentava col secondo aspetto.

Vincendo me col lume d'un sorriso,
ella mi disse: «Volgiti e ascolta;
ché non pur ne' miei occhi è paradiso».

Come si vede qui alcuna volta
l'affetto ne la vista, s'elli è tanto,
che da lui sia tutta l'anima tolta,

così nel fiammeggiar del folgór santo,
a ch'io mi volsi, conobbi la voglia

in lui di ragionarmi ancora alquanto.

El cominciò: «In questa quinta soglia
de l’albero che vive de la cima
e frutta sempre e mai non perde foglia,

spiriti son beati, che giù, prima
che venissero al ciel, fuor di gran voce,
sì ch’ogne musa ne sarebbe opima.

Però mira ne’ corni de la croce:
quello ch’io nomerò, lì farà l’atto
che fa in nube il suo foco veloce».

Io vidi per la croce un lume tratto
dal nomar Iosuè, com’ el si feo;
né mi fu noto il dir prima che ‘l fatto.

E al nome de l’alto Macabeo
vidi moversi un altro roteando,
e letizia era ferza del paleo.

Così per Carlo Magno e per Orlando
due ne seguì lo mio attento sguardo,
com’ occhio segue suo falcon volando.

Poscia trasse Guiglielmo e Rinoardo
e ‘l duca Gottifredi la mia vista
per quella croce, e Ruberto Guiscardo.

Indi, tra l’altre luci mota e mista,
mostrommi l’alma che m’avea parlato
qual era tra i cantor del cielo artista.

Io mi rivolsi dal mio destro lato
per vedere in Beatrice il mio dovere,
o per parlare o per atto, segnato;

e vidi le sue luci tanto mere,
tanto gioconde, che la sua sembianza

vinceva li altri e l’ultimo solere. 57

E come, per sentir più dilettanza
bene operando, l’uom di giorno in giorno
s’accorge che la sua virtute avanza, 60

sì m’accors’ io che ‘l mio girare intorno
col cielo insieme avea cresciuto l’arco,
veggendo quel miracol più addorno. 63

E qual è ‘l trasmutare in picciol varco
di tempo in bianca donna, quando ‘l volto
suo si discarchi di vergogna il carco, 66

tal fu ne li occhi miei, quando fui vòlto,
per lo candor de la temprata stella
sesta, che dentro a sé m’avea ricolto. 69

Io vidi in quella giovïal facella
lo sfavillar de l’amor che lì era
segnare a li occhi miei nostra favella. 72

E come augelli surti di rivera,
quasi congratulando a lor pasture,
fanno di sé or tonda or altra schiera, 75

sì dentro ai lumi sante creature
volitando cantavano, e faciensi
or D, or I, or L in sue figure. 78

Prima, cantando, a sua nota moviensi;
poi, diventando l’un di questi segni,
un poco s’arrestavano e taciensi. 81

O diva Pegasëa che li ‘ngegni
fai glorïosi e rendili longevi,
ed essi teco le cittadi e ‘ regni, 84

illustrami di te, sì ch’io rilevi
le lor figure com’ io l’ho concette:

paia tua possa in questi versi brevi! 87

Mostrarsi dunque in cinque volte sette
vocali e consonanti; e io notai
le parti sì, come mi parver dette. 90

‘DILIGITE IUSTITIAM’, primai
fur verbo e nome di tutto ‘l dipinto;
‘QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM’, fur sezzai. 93

Poscia ne l’emme del vocabol quinto
rimasero ordinate; sì che Giove
pareva argento lì d’oro distinto. 96

E vidi scendere altre luci dove
era il colmo de l’emme, e lì quetarsi
cantando, credo, il ben ch’a sé le move. 99

Poi, come nel percuoter d’i ciocchi arsi
surgono innumerabili faville,
onde li stolti sogliono agurarsi, 102

resurger parver quindi più di mille
luci e salir, qual assai e qual poco,
sì come ‘l sol che l’accende sortille; 105

e quïetata ciascuna in suo loco,
la testa e ‘l collo d’un’aguglia vidi
rappresentare a quel distinto foco. 108

Quei che dipinge lì, non ha chi ‘l guidi;
ma esso guida, e da lui si rammenta
quella virtù ch’è forma per li nidi. 111

L’altra bëatitudo, che contenta
pareva prima d’ingigliarsi a l’emme,
con poco moto seguitò la ‘mprenta. 114

O dolce stella, quali e quante gemme
mi dimostraro che nostra giustizia

effetto sia del ciel che tu ingemme!

Per ch'io prego la mente in che s'inizia
tuo moto e tua virtute, che rimiri
ond' esce il fummo che 'l tuo raggio vizia;

sì ch'un'altra fïata omai s'adiri
del comperare e vender dentro al templo
che si murò di segni e di martìri.

O milizia del ciel cu' io contemplo,
adora per color che sono in terra
tutti svïati dietro al malo essemplo!

Già si solea con le spade far guerra;
ma or si fa togliendo or qui or quivi
lo pan che 'l pïo Padre a nessun serra.

Ma tu che sol per cancellare scrivi,
pensa che Pietro e Paulo, che moriro
per la vigna che guasti, ancor son vivi.

Ben puoi tu dire: «I' ho fermo 'l disiro
sì a colui che volle viver solo
e che per salti fu tratto al martiro,

ch'io non conosco il pescator né Polo».

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto diciannovesimo

Canto XIX, nel quale li spiriti ch'erano ne la stella di Iove insieme conglutinati in forma d'aguglia, ad una voce solvono uno grande dubbio, e abominano e infamano tutti li re cristiani che regnavano ne l'anno di Cristo MCCC.

Parea dinanzi a me con l'ali aperte
la bella image che nel dolce frui
liete facevan l'anime conserte;

parea ciascuna rubinetto in cui
raggio di sole ardesse sì acceso,
che ne' miei occhi rifrangesse lui.

E quel che mi convien ritrar testeso,
non portò voce mai, né scrisse incostro,
né fu per fantasia già mai compreso;

ch'io vidi e anche udi' parlar lo rostro,
e sonar ne la voce e «io» e «mio»,
quand' era nel concetto e 'noi' e 'nostro'.

E cominciò: «Per esser giusto e pio
son io qui essaltato a quella gloria
che non si lascia vincere a disio;

e in terra lasciai la mia memoria
sì fatta, che le genti lì malvage
commendan lei, ma non seguon la storia».

Così un sol calor di molte brage
si fa sentir, come di molti amori
usciva solo un suon di quella image.

Ond' io appresso: «O perpetüi fiori
de l'etterna letizia, che pur uno
parer mi fate tutti vostri odori,

solvetemi, spirando, il gran digiuno
che lungamente m’ha tenuto in fame,
non trovandoli in terra cibo alcuno.

Ben so io che, se ‘n cielo altro reame
la divina giustizia fa suo specchio,
che ‘l vostro non l’apprende con velame.

Sapete come attento io m’apparecchio
ad ascoltar; sapete qual è quello
dubbio che m’è digiun cotanto vecchio».

Quasi falcone ch’esce del cappello,
move la testa e con l’ali si plaude,
voglia mostrando e faccendosi bello,

vid’ io farsi quel segno, che di laude
de la divina grazia era contesto,
con canti quai si sa chi là sù gaude.

Poi cominciò: «Colui che volse il sesto
a lo stremo del mondo, e dentro ad esso
distinse tanto occulto e manifesto,

non poté suo valor sì fare impresso
in tutto l’universo, che ‘l suo verbo
non rimanesse in infinito eccesso.

E ciò fa certo che ‘l primo superbo,
che fu la somma d’ogne creatura,
per non aspettar lume, cadde acerbo;

e quinci appar ch’ogne minor natura
è corto recettacolo a quel bene
che non ha fine e sé con sé misura.

Dunque vostra veduta, che convene
esser alcun de’ raggi de la mente
di che tutte le cose son ripiene,

non pò da sua natura esser possente
tanto, che suo principio non discerna
molto di là da quel che l'è parvente.

Però ne la giustizia sempiterna
la vista che riceve il vostro mondo,
com' occhio per lo mare, entro s'interna;

che, ben che da la proda veggia il fondo,
in pelago nol vede; e nondimeno
èli, ma cela lui l'esser profondo.

Lume non è, se non vien dal sereno
che non si turba mai; anzi è tenèbra
od ombra de la carne o suo veleno.

Assai t'è mo aperta la latebra
che t'ascondeva la giustizia viva,
di che facei question cotanto crebra;

ché tu dicevi: "Un uom nasce a la riva
de l'Indo, e quivi non è chi ragioni
di Cristo né chi legga né chi scriva;

e tutti suoi voleri e atti buoni
sono, quanto ragione umana vede,
sanza peccato in vita o in sermoni.

Muore non battezzato e sanza fede:
ov' è questa giustizia che 'l condanna?
ov' è la colpa sua, se ei non crede?".

Or tu chi se', che vuo' sedere a scranna,
per giudicar di lungi mille miglia
con la veduta corta d'una spanna?

Certo a colui che meco s'assottiglia,
se la Scrittura sovra voi non fosse,
da dubitar sarebbe a maraviglia.

Oh terreni animali! oh menti grosse!
La prima volontà, ch’è da sé buona,
da sé, ch’è sommo ben, mai non si mosse.

Cotanto è giusto quanto a lei consuona:
nullo creato bene a sé la tira,
ma essa, radïando, lui cagiona».

Quale sovresso il nido si rigira
poi c’ha pasciuti la cicogna i figli,
e come quel ch’è pasto la rimira;

cotal si fece, e sì leväi i cigli,
la benedetta imagine, che l’ali
movea sospinte da tanti consigli.

Roteando cantava, e dicea: «Quali
son le mie note a te, che non le ‘ntendi,
tal è il giudicio etterno a voi mortali».

Poi si quetaro quei lucenti incendi
de lo Spirito Santo ancor nel segno
che fé i Romani al mondo reverendi,

esso ricominciò: «A questo regno
non salì mai chi non credette ‘n Cristo,
né pria né poi ch’el si chiavasse al legno.

Ma vedi: molti gridan “Cristo, Cristo!”,
che saranno in giudicio assai men prope
a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo;

e tai Cristian dannerà l’Etïòpe,
quando si partiranno i due collegi,
l’uno in etterno ricco e l’altro inòpe.

Che poran dir li Perse a’ vostri regi,
come vedranno quel volume aperto
nel qual si scrivon tutti suoi dispregi?

Lì si vedrà, tra l’opere d’Alberto,
quella che tosto moverà la penna,
per che ‘l regno di Praga fia diserto.

Lì si vedrà il duol che sovra Senna
induce, falseggiando la moneta,
quel che morrà di colpo di cotenna.

Lì si vedrà la superbia ch’asseta,
che fa lo Scotto e l’Inghilese folle,
sì che non può soffrir dentro a sua meta.

Vedrassi la lussuria e ‘l viver molle
di quel di Spagna e di quel di Boemme,
che mai valor non conobbe né volle.

Vedrassi al Ciotto di Ierusalemme
segnata con un i la sua bontate,
quando ‘l contrario segnerà un emme.

Vedrassi l’avarizia e la viltate
di quei che guarda l’isola del foco,
ove Anchise finì la lunga etate;

e a dare ad intender quanto è poco,
la sua scrittura fian lettere mozze,
che noteranno molto in parvo loco.

E parranno a ciascun l’opere sozze
del barba e del fratel, che tanto egregia
nazione e due corone han fatte bozze.

E quel di Portogallo e di Norvegia
lì si conosceranno, e quel di Rascia
che male ha visto il conio di Vinegia.

Oh beata Ungheria, se non si lascia
più malmenare! e beata Navarra,
se s’armasse del monte che la fascia!

E creder de’ ciascun che già, per arra
di questo, Niccosïa e Famagosta
per la lor bestia si lamenti e garra,

che dal fianco de l’altre non si scosta».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventesimo

Canto XX, nel quale ancora suonano nel becco de l'Aquila certe parole per le quali apprende di conoscere alcuni di quelli spirti de li quali quella Aquila è composta.

Quando colui che tutto 'l mondo alluma
de l'emisperio nostro sì discende,
che 'l giorno d'ogne parte si consuma,

lo ciel, che sol di lui prima s'accende,
subitamente si rifà parvente
per molte luci, in che una risplende;

e questo atto del ciel mi venne a mente,
come 'l segno del mondo e de' suoi duci
nel benedetto rostro fu tacente;

però che tutte quelle vive luci,
vie più lucendo, cominciaron canti
da mia memoria labili e caduci.

O dolce amor che di riso t'ammanti,
quanto parevi ardente in que' flailli,
ch'avieno spirto sol di pensier santi!

Poscia che i cari e lucidi lapilli
ond' io vidi ingemmato il sesto lume
puoser silenzio a li angelici squilli,

udir mi parve un mormorar di fiume
che scende chiaro giù di pietra in pietra,
mostrando l'ubertà del suo cacume.

E come suono al collo de la cetra
prende sua forma, e sì com' al pertugio
de la sampogna vento che penètra,

così, rimosso d’aspettare indugio,
quel mormorar de l’aguglia salissi
su per lo collo, come fosse bugio.

Fecesi voce quivi, e quindi uscissi
per lo suo becco in forma di parole,
quali aspettava il core ov’ io le scrissi.

«La parte in me che vede e pate il sole
ne l’aguglie mortali», incominciommi,
«or fisamente riguardar si vole,

perché d’i fuochi ond’ io figura fommi,
quelli onde l’occhio in testa mi scintilla,
e’ di tutti lor gradi son li sommi.

Colui che luce in mezzo per pupilla,
fu il cantor de lo Spirito Santo,
che l’arca traslatò di villa in villa:

ora conosce il merto del suo canto,
in quanto effetto fu del suo consiglio,
per lo remunerar ch’è altrettanto.

Dei cinque che mi fan cerchio per ciglio,
colui che più al becco mi s’accosta,
la vedovella consolò del figlio:

ora conosce quanto caro costa
non seguir Cristo, per l’esperïenza
di questa dolce vita e de l’opposta.

E quel che segue in la circunferenza
di che ragiono, per l’arco superno,
morte indugiò per vera penitenza:

ora conosce che ‘l giudicio etterno
non si trasmuta, quando degno preco
fa crastino là giù de l’odïerno.

L’altro che segue, con le leggi e meco,
sotto buona intenzion che fé mal frutto,
per cedere al pastor si fece greco:

ora conosce come il mal dedutto
dal suo bene operar non li è nocivo,
avvegna che sia ‘l mondo indi distrutto.

E quel che vedi ne l’arco declivo,
Guiglielmo fu, cui quella terra plora
che piagne Carlo e Federigo vivo:

ora conosce come s’innamora
lo ciel del giusto rege, e al sembiante
del suo fulgore il fa vedere ancora.

Chi crederebbe giù nel mondo errante
che Rifëo Troiano in questo tondo
fosse la quinta de le luci sante?

Ora conosce assai di quel che ‘l mondo
veder non può de la divina grazia,
ben che sua vista non discerna il fondo».

Quale allodetta che ‘n aere si spazia
prima cantando, e poi tace contenta
de l’ultima dolcezza che la sazia,

tal mi sembiò l’imago de la ‘mprenta
de l’etterno piacere, al cui disio
ciascuna cosa qual ell’ è diventa.

E avvegna ch’io fossi al dubbiar mio
lì quasi vetro a lo color ch’el veste,
tempo aspettar tacendo non patio,

ma de la bocca, «Che cose son queste?»,
mi pinse con la forza del suo peso:
per ch’io di coruscar vidi gran feste.

Poi appresso, con l’occhio più acceso,
lo benedetto segno mi rispuose
per non tenermi in ammirar sospeso:

«Io veggio che tu credi queste cose
perch’ io le dico, ma non vedi come;
sì che, se son credute, sono ascose.

Fai come quei che la cosa per nome
apprende ben, ma la sua quiditate
veder non può se altri non la prome.

Regnum celorum vïolenza pate
da caldo amore e da viva speranza,
che vince la divina volontate:

non a guisa che l’omo a l’om sobranza,
ma vince lei perché vuole esser vinta,
e, vinta, vince con sua beninanza.

La prima vita del ciglio e la quinta
ti fa maravigliar, perché ne vedi
la regïon de li angeli dipinta.

D’i corpi suoi non uscir, come credi,
Gentili, ma Cristiani, in ferma fede
quel d’i passuri e quel d’i passi piedi.

Ché l’una de lo ‘nferno, u’ non si riede
già mai a buon voler, tornò a l’ossa;
e ciò di viva spene fu mercede:

di viva spene, che mise la possa
ne’ prieghi fatti a Dio per suscitarla,
sì che potesse sua voglia esser mossa.

L’anima glorïosa onde si parla,
tornata ne la carne, in che fu poco,
credette in lui che potëa aiutarla;

e credendo s’accese in tanto foco
di vero amor, ch’a la morte seconda
fu degna di venire a questo gioco.

L’altra, per grazia che da sì profonda
fontana stilla, che mai creatura
non pinse l’occhio infino a la prima onda,

tutto suo amor là giù pose a drittura:
per che, di grazia in grazia, Dio li aperse
l’occhio a la nostra redenzion futura;

ond’ ei credette in quella, e non sofferse
da indi il puzzo più del paganesmo;
e riprendiene le genti perverse.

Quelle tre donne li fur per battesmo
che tu vedesti da la destra rota,
dinanzi al battezzar più d’un millesmo.

O predestinazion, quanto remota
è la radice tua da quelli aspetti
che la prima cagion non veggion tota!

E voi, mortali, tenetevi stretti
a giudicar: ché noi, che Dio vedemo,
non conosciamo ancor tutti li eletti;

ed ènne dolce così fatto scemo,
perché il ben nostro in questo ben s’affina,
che quel che vole Iddio, e noi volemo».

Così da quella imagine divina,
per farmi chiara la mia corta vista,
data mi fu soave medicina.

E come a buon cantor buon citarista
fa seguitar lo guizzo de la corda,
in che più di piacer lo canto acquista,

sì, mentre ch’e’ parlò, sì mi ricorda
ch’io vidi le due luci benedette,
pur come batter d’occhi si concorda,

con le parole mover le fiammette.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventunesimo

Canto XXI, nel quale si monta ne la stella di Saturno, che è il settimo pianeto; e qui comincia la settima parte, e come Pietro Dammiano solve alcune questioni.

Già eran li occhi miei rifissi al volto
de la mia donna, e l’animo con essi,
e da ogne altro intento s’era tolto.

E quella non ridea; ma «S’io ridessi»,
mi cominciò, «tu ti faresti quale
fu Semelè quando di cener fessi:

ché la bellezza mia, che per le scale
de l’etterno palazzo più s’accende,
com’ hai veduto, quanto più si sale,

se non si temperasse, tanto splende,
che ‘l tuo mortal podere, al suo fulgore,
sarebbe fronda che trono scoscende.

Noi sem levati al settimo splendore,
che sotto ‘l petto del Leone ardente
raggia mo misto giù del suo valore.

Ficca di retro a li occhi tuoi la mente,
e fa di quelli specchi a la figura
che ‘n questo specchio ti sarà parvente».

Qual savesse qual era la pastura
del viso mio ne l’aspetto beato
quand’ io mi trasmutai ad altra cura,

conoscerebbe quanto m’era a grato
ubidire a la mia celeste scorta,
contrapesando l’un con l’altro lato.

Dentro al cristallo che ‘l vocabol porta,
cerchiando il mondo, del suo caro duce

sotto cui giacque ogne malizia morta,

di color d’oro in che raggio traluce
vid’ io uno scaleo eretto in suso
tanto, che nol seguiva la mia luce.

Vidi anche per li gradi scender giuso
tanti splendor, ch’io pensai ch’ogne lume
che par nel ciel, quindi fosse diffuso.

E come, per lo natural costume,
le pole insieme, al cominciar del giorno,
si movono a scaldar le fredde piume;

poi altre vanno via sanza ritorno,
altre rivolgon sé onde son mosse,
e altre roteando fan soggiorno;

tal modo parve me che quivi fosse
in quello sfavillar che ‘nsieme venne,
sì come in certo grado si percosse.

E quel che presso più ci si ritenne,
si fé sì chiaro, ch’io dicea pensando:
‘Io veggio ben l’amor che tu m’accenne.

Ma quella ond’ io aspetto il come e ‘l quando
del dire e del tacer, si sta; ond’ io,
contra ‘l disio, fo ben ch’io non dimando’.

Per ch’ella, che vedëa il tacer mio
nel veder di colui che tutto vede,
mi disse: «Solvi il tuo caldo disio».

E io incominciai: «La mia mercede
non mi fa degno de la tua risposta;
ma per colei che ‘l chieder mi concede,

vita beata che ti stai nascosta
dentro a la tua letizia, fammi nota

la cagion che sì presso mi t’ha posta;

e dì perché si tace in questa rota
la dolce sinfonia di paradiso,
che giù per l’altre suona sì divota».

«Tu hai l’udir mortal sì come il viso»,
rispuose a me; «onde qui non si canta
per quel che Bëatrice non ha riso.

Giù per li gradi de la scala santa
discesi tanto sol per farti festa
col dire e con la luce che mi ammanta;

né più amor mi fece esser più presta,
ché più e tanto amor quinci sù ferve,
sì come il fiammeggiar ti manifesta.

Ma l’alta carità, che ci fa serve
pronte al consiglio che ‘l mondo governa,
sorteggia qui sì come tu osserve».

«Io veggio ben», diss’ io, «sacra lucerna,
come libero amore in questa corte
basta a seguir la provedenza etterna;

ma questo è quel ch’a cerner mi par forte,
perché predestinata fosti sola
a questo officio tra le tue consorte».

Né venni prima a l’ultima parola,
che del suo mezzo fece il lume centro,
girando sé come veloce mola;

poi rispuose l’amor che v’era dentro:
«Luce divina sopra me s’appunta,
penetrando per questa in ch’io m’inventro,

la cui virtù, col mio veder congiunta,
mi leva sopra me tanto, ch’i’ veggio

la somma essenza de la quale è munta. 87

Quinci vien l’allegrezza ond’ io fiammeggio;
per ch’a la vista mia, quant’ ella è chiara,
la chiarità de la fiamma pareggio. 90

Ma quell’ alma nel ciel che più si schiara,
quel serafin che ‘n Dio più l’occhio ha fisso,
a la dimanda tua non satisfara, 93

però che sì s’innoltra ne lo abisso
de l’etterno statuto quel che chiedi,
che da ogne creata vista è scisso. 96

E al mondo mortal, quando tu riedi,
questo rapporta, sì che non presumma
a tanto segno più mover li piedi. 99

La mente, che qui luce, in terra fumma;
onde riguarda come può là giùe
quel che non pote perché ‘l ciel l’assumma». 102

Sì mi prescrisser le parole sue,
ch’io lasciai la quistione e mi ritrassi
a dimandarla umilmente chi fue. 105

«Tra ‘ due liti d’Italia surgon sassi,
e non molto distanti a la tua patria,
tanto che ‘ troni assai suonan più bassi, 108

e fanno un gibbo che si chiama Catria,
di sotto al quale è consecrato un ermo,
che suole esser disposto a sola latria». 111

Così ricominciommi il terzo sermo;
e poi, continüando, disse: «Quivi
al servigio di Dio mi fe’ sì fermo, 114

che pur con cibi di liquor d’ulivi
lievemente passava caldi e geli,

contento ne’ pensier contemplativi.

Render solea quel chiostro a questi cieli
fertilemente; e ora è fatto vano,
sì che tosto convien che si riveli.

In quel loco fu’ io Pietro Damiano,
e Pietro Peccator fu’ ne la casa
di Nostra Donna in sul lito adriano.

Poca vita mortal m’era rimasa,
quando fui chiesto e tratto a quel cappello,
che pur di male in peggio si travasa.

Venne Cefàs e venne il gran vasello
de lo Spirito Santo, magri e scalzi,
prendendo il cibo da qualunque ostello.

Or voglion quinci e quindi chi rincalzi
li moderni pastori e chi li meni,
tanto son gravi, e chi di rietro li alzi.

Cuopron d’i manti loro i palafreni,
sì che due bestie van sott’ una pelle:
oh pazïenza che tanto sostieni!».

A questa voce vid’ io più fiammelle
di grado in grado scendere e girarsi,
e ogne giro le facea più belle.

Dintorno a questa vennero e fermarsi,
e fero un grido di sì alto suono,
che non potrebbe qui assomigliarsi;

né io lo ‘ntesi, sì mi vinse il tuono.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiduesimo

Canto XXII, nel quale si tratta di quelli medesimi che nel precedente capitolo, qui sotto il titolo di Santo Maccario e di Santo Romoaldo; e infine dispitta il mondo e la sua picciolezza e le cose mondane, ripetendo e mostrando tutti li pianeti per li quali è intrato; ed entra con Beatrice nel segno d'i Gemini; e qui prende l'ottava parte di questa terza cantica.

Oppresso di stupore, a la mia guida
mi volsi, come parvol che ricorre
sempre colà dove più si confida;

e quella, come madre che soccorre
sùbito al figlio palido e anelo
con la sua voce, che 'l suol ben disporre,

mi disse: «Non sai tu che tu se' in cielo?
e non sai tu che 'l cielo è tutto santo,
e ciò che ci si fa vien da buon zelo?

Come t'avrebbe trasmutato il canto,
e io ridendo, mo pensar lo puoi,
poscia che 'l grido t'ha mosso cotanto;

nel qual, se 'nteso avessi i prieghi suoi,
già ti sarebbe nota la vendetta
che tu vedrai innanzi che tu muoi.

La spada di qua sù non taglia in fretta
né tardo, ma' ch'al parer di colui
che disïando o temendo l'aspetta.

Ma rivolgiti omai inverso altrui;
ch'assai illustri spiriti vedrai,
se com' io dico l'aspetto redui».

Come a lei piacque, li occhi ritornai,
e vidi cento sperule che 'nsieme
più s'abbellivan con mutüi rai.

Io stava come quei che ‘n sé repreme
la punta del disio, e non s’attenta
di domandar, sì del troppo si teme;

e la maggiore e la più luculenta
di quelle margherite innanzi fessi,
per far di sé la mia voglia contenta.

Poi dentro a lei udi’: «Se tu vedessi
com’ io la carità che tra noi arde,
li tuoi concetti sarebbero espressi.

Ma perché tu, aspettando, non tarde
a l’alto fine, io ti farò risposta
pur al pensier, da che sì ti riguarde.

Quel monte a cui Cassino è ne la costa
fu frequentato già in su la cima
da la gente ingannata e mal disposta;

e quel son io che sù vi portai prima
lo nome di colui che ‘n terra addusse
la verità che tanto ci soblima;

e tanta grazia sopra me relusse,
ch’io ritrassi le ville circunstanti
da l’empio cólto che ‘l mondo sedusse.

Questi altri fuochi tutti contemplanti
uomini fuoro, accesi di quel caldo
che fa nascere i fiori e ‘ frutti santi.

Qui è Maccario, qui è Romoaldo,
qui son li frati miei che dentro ai chiostri
fermar li piedi e tennero il cor saldo».

E io a lui: «L’affetto che dimostri
meco parlando, e la buona sembianza
ch’io veggio e noto in tutti li ardor vostri,

così m’ha dilatata mia fidanza,
come ‘l sol fa la rosa quando aperta
tanto divien quant’ ell’ ha di possanza.

Però ti priego, e tu, padre, m’accerta
s’io posso prender tanta grazia, ch’io
ti veggia con imagine scoverta».

Ond’ elli: «Frate, il tuo alto disio
s’adempierà in su l’ultima spera,
ove s’adempion tutti li altri e ‘l mio.

Ivi è perfetta, matura e intera
ciascuna disïanza; in quella sola
è ogne parte là ove sempr’ era,

perché non è in loco e non s’impola;
e nostra scala infino ad essa varca,
onde così dal viso ti s’invola.

Infin là sù la vide il patriarca
Iacobbe porger la superna parte,
quando li apparve d’angeli sì carca.

Ma, per salirla, mo nessun diparte
da terra i piedi, e la regola mia
rimasa è per danno de le carte.

Le mura che solieno esser badia
fatte sono spelonche, e le cocolle
sacca son piene di farina ria.

Ma grave usura tanto non si tolle
contra ‘l piacer di Dio, quanto quel frutto
che fa il cor de’ monaci sì folle;

ché quantunque la Chiesa guarda, tutto
è de la gente che per Dio dimanda;
non di parenti né d’altro più brutto.

La carne d’i mortali è tanto blanda,
che giù non basta buon cominciamento
dal nascer de la quercia al far la ghianda.

Pier cominciò sanz’ oro e sanz’ argento,
e io con orazione e con digiuno,
e Francesco umilmente il suo convento;

e se guardi ‘l principio di ciascuno,
poscia riguardi là dov’ è trascorso,
tu vederai del bianco fatto bruno.

Veramente Iordan vòlto retrorso
più fu, e ‘l mar fuggir, quando Dio volse,
mirabile a veder che qui ‘l soccorso».

Così mi disse, e indi si raccolse
al suo collegio, e ‘l collegio si strinse;
poi, come turbo, in sù tutto s’avvolse.

La dolce donna dietro a lor mi pinse
con un sol cenno su per quella scala,
sì sua virtù la mia natura vinse;

né mai qua giù dove si monta e cala
naturalmente, fu sì ratto moto
ch’agguagliar si potesse a la mia ala.

S’io torni mai, lettore, a quel divoto
trïunfo per lo quale io piango spesso
le mie peccata e ‘l petto mi percuoto,

tu non avresti in tanto tratto e messo
nel foco il dito, in quant’ io vidi ‘l segno
che segue il Tauro e fui dentro da esso.

O glorïose stelle, o lume pregno
di gran virtù, dal quale io riconosco
tutto, qual che si sia, il mio ingegno,

con voi nasceva e s’ascondeva vosco
quelli ch’è padre d’ogne mortal vita,
quand’ io senti’ di prima l’aere tosco;

e poi, quando mi fu grazia largita
d’entrar ne l’alta rota che vi gira,
la vostra regïon mi fu sortita.

A voi divotamente ora sospira
l’anima mia, per acquistar virtute
al passo forte che a sé la tira.

«Tu se’ sì presso a l’ultima salute»,
cominciò Bëatrice, «che tu dei
aver le luci tue chiare e acute;

e però, prima che tu più t’inlei,
rimira in giù, e vedi quanto mondo
sotto li piedi già esser ti fei;

sì che ‘l tuo cor, quantunque può, giocondo
s’appresenti a la turba trïunfante
che lieta vien per questo etera tondo».

Col viso ritornai per tutte quante
le sette spere, e vidi questo globo
tal, ch’io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante;

e quel consiglio per migliore approbo
che l’ha per meno; e chi ad altro pensa
chiamar si puote veramente probo.

Vidi la figlia di Latona incensa
sanza quell’ ombra che mi fu cagione
per che già la credetti rara e densa.

L’aspetto del tuo nato, Iperïone,
quivi sostenni, e vidi com’ si move
circa e vicino a lui Maia e Dïone.

Quindi m’apparve il temperar di Giove
tra ‘l padre e ‘l figlio; e quindi mi fu chiaro
il varïar che fanno di lor dove;

e tutti e sette mi si dimostraro
quanto son grandi e quanto son veloci
e come sono in distante riparo.

L’aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci,
volgendom’ io con li etterni Gemelli,
tutta m’apparve da’ colli a le foci;

poscia rivolsi li occhi a li occhi belli.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventitreesimo

Canto XXIII, dove si tratta come l'auttore vide la Beata Virgine Maria e li abitatori de la celestiale corte, de la quale mirabilemente favella in questo canto; e qui si prende la nona parte di questa terza cantica.

Come l'augello, intra l'amate fronde,
posato al nido de' suoi dolci nati
la notte che le cose ci nasconde,

che, per veder li aspetti disïati
e per trovar lo cibo onde li pasca,
in che gravi labor li sono aggrati,

previene il tempo in su aperta frasca,
e con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,
fiso guardando pur che l'alba nasca;

così la donna mïa stava eretta
e attenta, rivolta inver' la plaga
sotto la quale il sol mostra men fretta:

sì che, veggendola io sospesa e vaga,
fecimi qual è quei che disïando
altro vorria, e sperando s'appaga.

Ma poco fu tra uno e altro quando,
del mio attender, dico, e del vedere
lo ciel venir più e più rischiarando;

e Bëatrice disse: «Ecco le schiere
del trïunfo di Cristo e tutto 'l frutto
ricolto del girar di queste spere!».

Pariemi che 'l suo viso ardesse tutto,
e li occhi avea di letizia sì pieni,
che passarmen convien sanza costrutto.

Quale ne’ plenilunïi sereni
Trivïa ride tra le ninfe etterne
che dipingon lo ciel per tutti i seni,

vid’ i’ sopra migliaia di lucerne
un sol che tutte quante l’accendea,
come fa ‘l nostro le viste superne;

e per la viva luce trasparea
la lucente sustanza tanto chiara
nel viso mio, che non la sostenea.

Oh Bëatrice, dolce guida e cara!
Ella mi disse: «Quel che ti sobranza
è virtù da cui nulla si ripara.

Quivi è la sapïenza e la possanza
ch’aprì le strade tra ‘l cielo e la terra,
onde fu già sì lunga disïanza».

Come foco di nube si diserra
per dilatarsi sì che non vi cape,
e fuor di sua natura in giù s’atterra,

la mente mia così, tra quelle dape
fatta più grande, di sé stessa uscìo,
e che si fesse rimembrar non sape.

«Apri li occhi e riguarda qual son io;
tu hai vedute cose, che possente
se’ fatto a sostener lo riso mio».

Io era come quei che si risente
di visïone oblita e che s’ingegna
indarno di ridurlasi a la mente,

quand’ io udi’ questa proferta, degna
di tanto grato, che mai non si stingue
del libro che ‘l preterito rassegna.

Se mo sonasser tutte quelle lingue
che Polimnïa con le suore fero
del latte lor dolcissimo più pingue,

per aiutarmi, al millesmo del vero
non si verria, cantando il santo riso
e quanto il santo aspetto facea mero;

e così, figurando il paradiso,
convien saltar lo sacrato poema,
come chi trova suo cammin riciso.

Ma chi pensasse il ponderoso tema
e l'omero mortal che se ne carca,
nol biasmerebbe se sott' esso trema:

non è pareggio da picciola barca
quel che fendendo va l'ardita prora,
né da nocchier ch'a sé medesmo parca.

«Perché la faccia mia sì t'innamora,
che tu non ti rivolgi al bel giardino
che sotto i raggi di Cristo s'infiora?

Quivi è la rosa in che 'l verbo divino
carne si fece; quivi son li gigli
al cui odor si prese il buon cammino».

Così Beatrice; e io, che a' suoi consigli
tutto era pronto, ancora mi rendei
a la battaglia de' debili cigli.

Come a raggio di sol, che puro mei
per fratta nube, già prato di fiori
vider, coverti d'ombra, li occhi miei;

vid' io così più turbe di splendori,
folgorate di sù da raggi ardenti,
sanza veder principio di folgóri.

O benigna vertù che sì li ‘mprenti,
sù t’essaltasti, per largirmi loco
a li occhi lì che non t’eran possenti.

Il nome del bel fior ch’io sempre invoco
e mane e sera, tutto mi ristrinse
l’animo ad avvisar lo maggior foco;

e come ambo le luci mi dipinse
il quale e il quanto de la viva stella
che là sù vince come qua giù vinse,

per entro il cielo scese una facella,
formata in cerchio a guisa di corona,
e cinsela e girossi intorno ad ella.

Qualunque melodia più dolce suona
qua giù e più a sé l’anima tira,
parrebbe nube che squarciata tona,

comparata al sonar di quella lira
onde si coronava il bel zaffiro
del quale il ciel più chiaro s’inzaffira.

«Io sono amore angelico, che giro
l’alta letizia che spira del ventre
che fu albergo del nostro disiro;

e girerommi, donna del ciel, mentre
che seguirai tuo figlio, e farai dia
più la spera suprema perché lì entre».

Così la circulata melodia
si sigillava, e tutti li altri lumi
facean sonare il nome di Maria.

Lo real manto di tutti i volumi
del mondo, che più ferve e più s’avviva
ne l’alito di Dio e nei costumi,

avea sopra di noi l’interna riva
tanto distante, che la sua parvenza,
là dov’ io era, ancor non appariva:

però non ebber li occhi miei potenza
di seguitar la coronata fiamma
che si levò appresso sua semenza.

E come fantolin che ‘nver’ la mamma
tende le braccia, poi che ‘l latte prese,
per l’animo che ‘nfin di fuor s’infiamma;

ciascun di quei candori in sù si stese
con la sua cima, sì che l’alto affetto
ch’elli avieno a Maria mi fu palese.

Indi rimaser lì nel mio cospetto,
‘Regina celi’ cantando sì dolce,
che mai da me non si partì ‘l diletto.

Oh quanta è l’ubertà che si soffolce
in quelle arche ricchissime che fuoro
a seminar qua giù buone bobolce!

Quivi si vive e gode del tesoro
che s’acquistò piangendo ne lo essilio
di Babillòn, ove si lasciò l’oro.

Quivi trïunfa, sotto l’alto Filio
di Dio e di Maria, di sua vittoria,
e con l’antico e col novo concilio,

colui che tien le chiavi di tal gloria.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiquattresimo

Canto XXIV, dove si tratta de la nona e ultima parte di questa ultima cantica; ne la quale san Pietro Appostolo a priego di Beatrice essamina l'auttore sopra la fede cattolica.

«O sodalizio eletto a la gran cena
del benedetto Agnello, il qual vi ciba
sì, che la vostra voglia è sempre piena,

se per grazia di Dio questi preliba
di quel che cade de la vostra mensa,
prima che morte tempo li prescriba,

ponete mente a l'affezione immensa
e roratelo alquanto: voi bevete
sempre del fonte onde vien quel ch'ei pensa».

Così Beatrice; e quelle anime liete
si fero spere sopra fissi poli,
fiammando, volte, a guisa di comete.

E come cerchi in tempra d'orïuoli
si giran sì, che 'l primo a chi pon mente
quïeto pare, e l'ultimo che voli;

così quelle carole, differente-
mente danzando, de la sua ricchezza
mi facieno stimar, veloci e lente.

Di quella ch'io notai di più carezza
vid' ïo uscire un foco sì felice,
che nullo vi lasciò di più chiarezza;

e tre fïate intorno di Beatrice
si volse con un canto tanto divo,
che la mia fantasia nol mi ridice.

Però salta la penna e non lo scrivo:
ché l’imagine nostra a cotai pieghe,
non che ‘l parlare, è troppo color vivo.

«O santa suora mia che sì ne prieghe
divota, per lo tuo ardente affetto
da quella bella spera mi disleghe».

Poscia fermato, il foco benedetto
a la mia donna dirizzò lo spiro,
che favellò così com’ i’ ho detto.

Ed ella: «O luce etterna del gran viro
a cui Nostro Segnor lasciò le chiavi,
ch’ei portò giù, di questo gaudio miro,

tenta costui di punti lievi e gravi,
come ti piace, intorno de la fede,
per la qual tu su per lo mare andavi.

S’elli ama bene e bene spera e crede,
non t’è occulto, perché ‘l viso hai quivi
dov’ ogne cosa dipinta si vede;

ma perché questo regno ha fatto civi
per la verace fede, a glorïarla,
di lei parlare è ben ch’a lui arrivi».

Sì come il baccialier s’arma e non parla
fin che ‘l maestro la question propone,
per approvarla, non per terminarla,

così m’armava io d’ogne ragione
mentre ch’ella dicea, per esser presto
a tal querente e a tal professione.

«Dì, buon Cristiano, fatti manifesto:
fede che è?». Ond’ io levai la fronte
in quella luce onde spirava questo;

poi mi volsi a Beatrice, ed essa pronte
sembianze femmi perch’ ïo spandessi
l’acqua di fuor del mio interno fonte.

«La Grazia che mi dà ch’io mi confessi»,
comincia’ io, «da l’alto primipilo,
faccia li miei concetti bene espressi».

E seguitai: «Come ‘l verace stilo
ne scrisse, padre, del tuo caro frate
che mise teco Roma nel buon filo,

fede è sustanza di cose sperate
e argomento de le non parventi;
e questa pare a me sua quiditate».

Allora udi’: «Dirittamente senti,
se bene intendi perché la ripuose
tra le sustanze, e poi tra li argomenti».

E io appresso: «Le profonde cose
che mi largiscon qui la lor parvenza,
a li occhi di là giù son sì ascose,

che l’esser loro v’è in sola credenza,
sopra la qual si fonda l’alta spene;
e però di sustanza prende intenza.

E da questa credenza ci convene
silogizzar, sanz’ avere altra vista:
però intenza d’argomento tene».

Allora udi’: «Se quantunque s’acquista
giù per dottrina, fosse così ‘nteso,
non lì avria loco ingegno di sofista».

Così spirò di quello amore acceso;
indi soggiunse: «Assai bene è trascorsa
d’esta moneta già la lega e ‘l peso;

ma dimmi se tu l’hai ne la tua borsa».
Ond’ io: «Sì ho, sì lucida e sì tonda,
che nel suo conio nulla mi s’inforsa».

Appresso uscì de la luce profonda
che lì splendeva: «Questa cara gioia
sopra la quale ogne virtù si fonda,

onde ti venne?». E io: «La larga ploia
de lo Spirito Santo, ch’è diffusa
in su le vecchie e ‘n su le nuove cuoia,

è silogismo che la m’ha conchiusa
acutamente sì, che ‘nverso d’ella
ogne dimostrazion mi pare ottusa».

Io udi’ poi: «L’antica e la novella
proposizion che così ti conchiude,
perché l’hai tu per divina favella?».

E io: «La prova che ‘l ver mi dischiude,
son l’opere seguite, a che natura
non scalda ferro mai né batte incude».

Risposto fummi: «Dì, chi t’assicura
che quell’ opere fosser? Quel medesmo
che vuol provarsi, non altri, il ti giura».

«Se ‘l mondo si rivolse al cristianesmo»,
diss’ io, «sanza miracoli, quest’ uno
è tal, che li altri non sono il centesmo:

ché tu intrasti povero e digiuno
in campo, a seminar la buona pianta
che fu già vite e ora è fatta pruno».

Finito questo, l’alta corte santa
risonò per le spere un ‘Dio laudamo’
ne la melode che là sù si canta.

E quel baron che sì di ramo in ramo,
essaminando, già tratto m’avea,
che a l’ultime fronde appressavamo,

ricominciò: «La Grazia, che donnea
con la tua mente, la bocca t’aperse
infino a qui come aprir si dovea,

sì ch’io approvo ciò che fuori emerse;
ma or convien espremer quel che credi,
e onde a la credenza tua s’offerse».

«O santo padre, e spirito che vedi
ciò che credesti sì, che tu vincesti
ver’ lo sepulcro più giovani piedi»,

comincia’ io, «tu vuo’ ch’io manifesti
la forma qui del pronto creder mio,
e anche la cagion di lui chiedesti.

E io rispondo: Io credo in uno Dio
solo ed etterno, che tutto ‘l ciel move,
non moto, con amore e con disio;

e a tal creder non ho io pur prove
fisice e metafisice, ma dalmi
anche la verità che quinci piove

per Moïsè, per profeti e per salmi,
per l’Evangelio e per voi che scriveste
poi che l’ardente Spirto vi fé almi;

e credo in tre persone etterne, e queste
credo una essenza sì una e sì trina,
che soffera congiunto ‘sono’ ed ‘este’.

De la profonda condizion divina
ch’io tocco mo, la mente mi sigilla
più volte l’evangelica dottrina.

Quest’ è ‘l principio, quest’ è la favilla
che si dilata in fiamma poi vivace,
e come stella in cielo in me scintilla». 147

Come ‘l segnor ch’ascolta quel che i piace,
da indi abbraccia il servo, gratulando
per la novella, tosto ch’el si tace; 150

così, benedicendomi cantando,
tre volte cinse me, sì com’ io tacqui,
l’appostolico lume al cui comando 153

io avea detto: sì nel dir li piacqui!

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto venticinquesimo

Canto XXV, che tratta come l'auttore parla con Beatrice e con santo Iacopo Maggiore sopra certe questioni de le quali santo Iacopo solve la prima.

Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,

vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile ov' io dormi' agnello,
nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;

con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte
del mio battesmo prenderò 'l cappello;

però che ne la fede, che fa conte
l'anime a Dio, quivi intra' io, e poi
Pietro per lei sì mi girò la fronte.

Indi si mosse un lume verso noi
di quella spera ond' uscì la primizia
che lasciò Cristo d'i vicari suoi;

e la mia donna, piena di letizia,
mi disse: «Mira, mira: ecco il barone
per cui là giù si vicita Galizia».

Sì come quando il colombo si pone
presso al compagno, l'uno a l'altro pande,
girando e mormorando, l'affezione;

così vid' ïo l'un da l'altro grande
principe glorïoso essere accolto,
laudando il cibo che là sù li prande.

Ma poi che 'l gratular si fu assolto,
tacito coram me ciascun s'affisse,

ignito sì che vincëa ‘l mio volto.

Ridendo allora Bëatrice disse:
«Inclita vita per cui la larghezza
de la nostra basilica si scrisse,

fa risonar la spene in questa altezza:
tu sai, che tante fiate la figuri,
quante Iesù ai tre fé più carezza».

«Leva la testa e fa che t’assicuri:
ché ciò che vien qua sù del mortal mondo,
convien ch’ai nostri raggi si maturi».

Questo conforto del foco secondo
mi venne; ond’ io leväi li occhi a’ monti
che li ‘ncurvaron pria col troppo pondo.

«Poi che per grazia vuol che tu t’affronti
lo nostro Imperadore, anzi la morte,
ne l’aula più secreta co’ suoi conti,

sì che, veduto il ver di questa corte,
la spene, che là giù bene innamora,
in te e in altrui di ciò conforte,

dì quel ch’ell’ è, dì come se ne ‘nfiora
la mente tua, e dì onde a te venne».
Così seguì ‘l secondo lume ancora.

E quella pïa che guidò le penne
de le mie ali a così alto volo,
a la risposta così mi prevenne:

«La Chiesa militante alcun figliuolo
non ha con più speranza, com’ è scritto
nel Sol che raggia tutto nostro stuolo:

però li è conceduto che d’Egitto
vegna in Ierusalemme per vedere,

anzi che ‘l militar li sia prescritto.

Li altri due punti, che non per sapere
son dimandati, ma perch’ ei rapporti
quanto questa virtù t’è in piacere,

a lui lasc’ io, ché non li saran forti
né di iattanza; ed elli a ciò risponda,
e la grazia di Dio ciò li comporti».

Come discente ch’a dottor seconda
pronto e libente in quel ch’elli è esperto,
perché la sua bontà si disasconda,

«Spene», diss’ io, «è uno attender certo
de la gloria futura, il qual produce
grazia divina e precedente merto.

Da molte stelle mi vien questa luce;
ma quei la distillò nel mio cor pria
che fu sommo cantor del sommo duce.

‘Sperino in te’, ne la sua tëodia
dice, ‘color che sanno il nome tuo’:
e chi nol sa, s’elli ha la fede mia?

Tu mi stillasti, con lo stillar suo,
ne la pistola poi; sì ch’io son pieno,
e in altrui vostra pioggia repluo».

Mentr’ io diceva, dentro al vivo seno
di quello incendio tremolava un lampo
sùbito e spesso a guisa di baleno.

Indi spirò: «L’amore ond’ ïo avvampo
ancor ver’ la virtù che mi seguette
infin la palma e a l’uscir del campo,

vuol ch’io respiri a te che ti dilette
di lei; ed emmi a grato che tu diche

quello che la speranza ti ‘mpromette». 87

E io: «Le nove e le scritture antiche
pongon lo segno, ed esso lo mi addita,
de l’anime che Dio s’ha fatte amiche. 90

Dice Isaia che ciascuna vestita
ne la sua terra fia di doppia vesta:
e la sua terra è questa dolce vita; 93

e ‘l tuo fratello assai vie più digesta,
là dove tratta de le bianche stole,
questa revelazion ci manifesta». 96

E prima, appresso al fin d’este parole,
‘Sperent in te’ di sopr’ a noi s’udì;
a che rispuoser tutte le carole. 99

Poscia tra esse un lume si schiarì
sì che, se ‘l Cancro avesse un tal cristallo,
l’inverno avrebbe un mese d’un sol dì. 102

E come surge e va ed entra in ballo
vergine lieta, sol per fare onore
a la novizia, non per alcun fallo, 105

così vid’ io lo schiarato splendore
venire a’ due che si volgieno a nota
qual conveniesi al loro ardente amore. 108

Misesi lì nel canto e ne la rota;
e la mia donna in lor tenea l’aspetto,
pur come sposa tacita e immota. 111

«Questi è colui che giacque sopra ‘l petto
del nostro pellicano, e questi fue
di su la croce al grande officio eletto». 114

La donna mia così; né però piùe
mosser la vista sua di stare attenta

poscia che prima le parole sue.

Qual è colui ch'adocchia e s'argomenta
di vedere eclissar lo sole un poco,
che, per veder, non vedente diventa;

tal mi fec' ïo a quell' ultimo foco
mentre che detto fu: «Perché t'abbagli
per veder cosa che qui non ha loco?

In terra è terra il mio corpo, e saragli
tanto con li altri, che 'l numero nostro
con l'etterno proposito s'agguagli.

Con le due stole nel beato chiostro
son le due luci sole che saliro;
e questo apporterai nel mondo vostro».

A questa voce l'infiammato giro
si quïetò con esso il dolce mischio
che si facea nel suon del trino spiro,

sì come, per cessar fatica o rischio,
li remi, pria ne l'acqua ripercossi,
tutti si posano al sonar d'un fischio.

Ahi quanto ne la mente mi commossi,
quando mi volsi per veder Beatrice,
per non poter veder, benché io fossi

presso di lei, e nel mondo felice!

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto ventiseiesimo

Canto XXVI, nel quale l'auttore ne conforta seguitare lo innefabile amore, e dove trova Adamo il nostro primo padre, dicente a lui il tempo de la sua felicitade e infelicitade.

Mentr' io dubbiava per lo viso spento,
de la fulgida fiamma che lo spense
uscì un spiro che mi fece attento,

dicendo: «Intanto che tu ti risense
de la vista che haï in me consunta,
ben è che ragionando la compense.

Comincia dunque; e dì ove s'appunta
l'anima tua, e fa ragion che sia
la vista in te smarrita e non defunta:

perché la donna che per questa dia
regïon ti conduce, ha ne lo sguardo
la virtù ch'ebbe la man d'Anania».

Io dissi: «Al suo piacere e tosto e tardo
vegna remedio a li occhi, che fuor porte
quand' ella entrò col foco ond' io sempr' ardo.

Lo ben che fa contenta questa corte,
Alfa e O è di quanta scrittura
mi legge Amore o lievemente o forte».

Quella medesma voce che paura
tolta m'avea del sùbito abbarbaglio,
di ragionare ancor mi mise in cura;

e disse: «Certo a più angusto vaglio
ti conviene schiarar: dicer convienti
chi drizzò l'arco tuo a tal berzaglio».

E io: «Per filosofici argomenti
e per autorità che quinci scende
cotale amor convien che in me si ‘mprenti:

ché ‘l bene, in quanto ben, come s’intende,
così accende amore, e tanto maggio
quanto più di bontate in sé comprende.

Dunque a l’essenza ov’ è tanto avvantaggio,
che ciascun ben che fuor di lei si trova
altro non è ch’un lume di suo raggio,

più che in altra convien che si mova
la mente, amando, di ciascun che cerne
il vero in che si fonda questa prova.

Tal vero a l’intelletto mïo sterne
colui che mi dimostra il primo amore
di tutte le sustanze sempiterne.

Sternel la voce del verace autore,
che dice a Moïsè, di sé parlando:
‘Io ti farò vedere ogne valore’.

Sternilmi tu ancora, incominciando
l’alto preconio che grida l’arcano
di qui là giù sovra ogne altro bando».

E io udi’: «Per intelletto umano
e per autoritadi a lui concorde
d’i tuoi amori a Dio guarda il sovrano.

Ma dì ancor se tu senti altre corde
tirarti verso lui, sì che tu suone
con quanti denti questo amor ti morde».

Non fu latente la santa intenzione
de l’aguglia di Cristo, anzi m’accorsi
dove volea menar mia professione.

Però ricominciai: «Tutti quei morsi
che posson far lo cor volgere a Dio,
a la mia caritate son concorsi:

ché l’essere del mondo e l’esser mio,
la morte ch’el sostenne perch’ io viva,
e quel che spera ogne fedel com’ io,

con la predetta conoscenza viva,
tratto m’hanno del mar de l’amor torto,
e del diritto m’han posto a la riva.

Le fronde onde s’infronda tutto l’orto
de l’ortolano etterno, am’ io cotanto
quanto da lui a lor di bene è porto».

Sì com’ io tacqui, un dolcissimo canto
risonò per lo cielo, e la mia donna
dicea con li altri: «Santo, santo, santo!».

E come a lume acuto si disonna
per lo spirto visivo che ricorre
a lo splendor che va di gonna in gonna,

e lo svegliato ciò che vede aborre,
sì nescïa è la sùbita vigilia
fin che la stimativa non soccorre;

così de li occhi miei ogne quisquilia
fugò Beatrice col raggio d’i suoi,
che rifulgea da più di mille milia:

onde mei che dinanzi vidi poi;
e quasi stupefatto domandai
d’un quarto lume ch’io vidi tra noi.

E la mia donna: «Dentro da quei rai
vagheggia il suo fattor l’anima prima
che la prima virtù creasse mai».

Come la fronda che flette la cima
nel transito del vento, e poi si leva
per la propria virtù che la soblima,

fec’ io in tanto in quant’ ella diceva,
stupendo, e poi mi rifece sicuro
un disio di parlare ond’ ïo ardeva.

E cominciai: «O pomo che maturo
solo prodotto fosti, o padre antico
a cui ciascuna sposa è figlia e nuro,

divoto quanto posso a te supplìco
perché mi parli: tu vedi mia voglia,
e per udirti tosto non la dico».

Talvolta un animal coverto broglia,
sì che l’affetto convien che si paia
per lo seguir che face a lui la ‘nvoglia;

e similmente l’anima primaia
mi facea trasparer per la coverta
quant’ ella a compiacermi venìa gaia.

Indi spirò: «Sanz’ essermi proferta
da te, la voglia tua discerno meglio
che tu qualunque cosa t’è più certa;

perch’ io la veggio nel verace speglio
che fa di sé pareglio a l’altre cose,
e nulla face lui di sé pareglio.

Tu vuogli udir quant’ è che Dio mi puose
ne l’eccelso giardino, ove costei
a così lunga scala ti dispuose,

e quanto fu diletto a li occhi miei,
e la propria cagion del gran disdegno,
e l’idïoma ch’usai e che fei.

Or, figliuol mio, non il gustar del legno
fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio,
ma solamente il trapassar del segno.

Quindi onde mosse tua donna Virgilio,
quattromilia trecento e due volumi
di sol desiderai questo concilio;

e vidi lui tornare a tutt' i lumi
de la sua strada novecento trenta
fïate, mentre ch'ïo in terra fu'mi.

La lingua ch'io parlai fu tutta spenta
innanzi che a l'ovra inconsummabile
fosse la gente di Nembròt attenta:

ché nullo effetto mai razïonabile,
per lo piacere uman che rinovella
seguendo il cielo, sempre fu durabile.

Opera naturale è ch'uom favella;
ma così o così, natura lascia
poi fare a voi secondo che v'abbella.

Pria ch'i' scendessi a l'infernale ambascia,
I s'appellava in terra il sommo bene
onde vien la letizia che mi fascia;

e El si chiamò poi: e ciò convene,
ché l'uso d'i mortali è come fronda
in ramo, che sen va e altra vene.

Nel monte che si leva più da l'onda,
fu' io, con vita pura e disonesta,
da la prim' ora a quella che seconda,

come 'l sol muta quadra, l'ora sesta».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventisettesimo

Canto XXVII, dove tratta sì come santo Pietro appostolo, proverbiando li suoi successori papi, adempie l'animo de l'auttore di questo libro.

'Al Padre, al Figlio, a lo Spirito Santo',
cominciò, 'gloria!', tutto 'l paradiso,
sì che m'inebrïava il dolce canto.

Ciò ch'io vedeva mi sembiava un riso
de l'universo; per che mia ebbrezza
intrava per l'udire e per lo viso.

Oh gioia! oh ineffabile allegrezza!
oh vita intègra d'amore e di pace!
oh sanza brama sicura ricchezza!

Dinanzi a li occhi miei le quattro face
stavano accese, e quella che pria venne
incominciò a farsi più vivace,

e tal ne la sembianza sua divenne,
qual diverrebbe Iove, s'elli e Marte
fossero augelli e cambiassersi penne.

La provedenza, che quivi comparte
vice e officio, nel beato coro
silenzio posto avea da ogne parte,

quand' ïo udi': «Se io mi trascoloro,
non ti maravigliar, ché, dicend' io,
vedrai trascolorar tutti costoro.

Quelli ch'usurpa in terra il luogo mio,
il luogo mio, il luogo mio che vaca
ne la presenza del Figliuol di Dio,

fatt' ha del cimitero mio cloaca
del sangue e de la puzza; onde 'l perverso

che cadde di qua sù, là giù si placa». 27

Di quel color che per lo sole avverso
nube dipigne da sera e da mane,
vid' ïo allora tutto 'l ciel cosperso. 30

E come donna onesta che permane
di sé sicura, e per l'altrui fallanza,
pur ascoltando, timida si fane, 33

così Beatrice trasmutò sembianza;
e tale eclissi credo che 'n ciel fue
quando patì la suprema possanza. 36

Poi procedetter le parole sue
con voce tanto da sé trasmutata,
che la sembianza non si mutò piùe: 39

«Non fu la sposa di Cristo allevata
del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,
per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata; 42

ma per acquisto d'esto viver lieto
e Sisto e Pïo e Calisto e Urbano
sparser lo sangue dopo molto fleto. 45

Non fu nostra intenzion ch'a destra mano
d'i nostri successor parte sedesse,
parte da l'altra del popol cristiano; 48

né che le chiavi che mi fuor concesse,
divenisser signaculo in vessillo
che contra battezzati combattesse; 51

né ch'io fossi figura di sigillo
a privilegi venduti e mendaci,
ond' io sovente arrosso e disfavillo. 54

In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci
si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi:

o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci?

Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi
s’apparecchian di bere: o buon principio,
a che vil fine convien che tu caschi!

Ma l’alta provedenza, che con Scipio
difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,
soccorrà tosto, sì com’ io concipio;

e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo
ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca,
e non asconder quel ch’io non ascondo».

Sì come di vapor gelati fiocca
in giuso l’aere nostro, quando ‘l corno
de la capra del ciel col sol si tocca,

in sù vid’ io così l’etera addorno
farsi e fioccar di vapor trïunfanti
che fatto avien con noi quivi soggiorno.

Lo viso mio seguiva i suoi sembianti,
e seguì fin che ‘l mezzo, per lo molto,
li tolse il trapassar del più avanti.

Onde la donna, che mi vide assolto
de l’attendere in sù, mi disse: «Adima
il viso e guarda come tu se’ vòlto».

Da l’ora ch’ïo avea guardato prima
i’ vidi mosso me per tutto l’arco
che fa dal mezzo al fine il primo clima;

sì ch’io vedea di là da Gade il varco
folle d’Ulisse, e di qua presso il lito
nel qual si fece Europa dolce carco.

E più mi fora discoverto il sito
di questa aiuola; ma ‘l sol procedea

sotto i mie’ piedi un segno e più partito.

La mente innamorata, che donnea
con la mia donna sempre, di ridure
ad essa li occhi più che mai ardea;

e se natura o arte fé pasture
da pigliare occhi, per aver la mente,
in carne umana o ne le sue pitture,

tutte adunate, parrebber nïente
ver’ lo piacer divin che mi refulse,
quando mi volsi al suo viso ridente.

E la virtù che lo sguardo m’indulse,
del bel nido di Leda mi divelse,
e nel ciel velocissimo m’impulse.

Le parti sue vivissime ed eccelse
sì uniforme son, ch’i’ non so dire
qual Bëatrice per loco mi scelse.

Ma ella, che vedëa ‘l mio disire,
incominciò, ridendo tanto lieta,
che Dio parea nel suo volto gioire:

«La natura del mondo, che quïeta
il mezzo e tutto l’altro intorno move,
quinci comincia come da sua meta;

e questo cielo non ha altro dove
che la mente divina, in che s’accende
l’amor che ‘l volge e la virtù ch’ei piove.

Luce e amor d’un cerchio lui comprende,
sì come questo li altri; e quel precinto
colui che ‘l cinge solamente intende.

Non è suo moto per altro distinto,
ma li altri son mensurati da questo,

sì come diece da mezzo e da quinto;

e come il tempo tegna in cotal testo
le sue radici e ne li altri le fronde,
omai a te può esser manifesto.

Oh cupidigia, che i mortali affonde
sì sotto te, che nessuno ha podere
di trarre li occhi fuor de le tue onde!

Ben fiorisce ne li uomini il volere;
ma la pioggia continüa converte
in bozzacchioni le sosine vere.

Fede e innocenza son reperte
solo ne' parvoletti; poi ciascuna
pria fugge che le guance sian coperte.

Tale, balbuzïendo ancor, digiuna,
che poi divora, con la lingua sciolta,
qualunque cibo per qualunque luna;

e tal, balbuzïendo, ama e ascolta
la madre sua, che, con loquela intera,
disïa poi di vederla sepolta.

Così si fa la pelle bianca nera
nel primo aspetto de la bella figlia
di quel ch'apporta mane e lascia sera.

Tu, perché non ti facci maraviglia,
pensa che 'n terra non è chi governi;
onde sì svïa l'umana famiglia.

Ma prima che gennaio tutto si sverni
per la centesma ch'è là giù negletta,
raggeran sì questi cerchi superni,

che la fortuna che tanto s'aspetta,
le poppe volgerà u' son le prore,

sì che la classe correrà diretta; 147

e vero frutto verrà dopo ‘l fiore».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventottesimo

Canto XXVIII, nel quale Beatrice distingue a l'auttore li nove ordini de li angeli gloriosi che sono nel nono cielo e il loro offizio.

Poscia che 'ncontro a la vita presente
d'i miseri mortali aperse 'l vero
quella che 'mparadisa la mia mente,

come in lo specchio fiamma di doppiero
vede colui che se n'alluma retro,
prima che l'abbia in vista o in pensiero,

e sé rivolge per veder se 'l vetro
li dice il vero, e vede ch'el s'accorda
con esso come nota con suo metro;

così la mia memoria si ricorda
ch'io feci riguardando ne' belli occhi
onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda.

E com' io mi rivolsi e furon tocchi
li miei da ciò che pare in quel volume,
quandunque nel suo giro ben s'adocchi,

un punto vidi che raggiava lume
acuto sì, che 'l viso ch'elli affoca
chiuder conviensi per lo forte acume;

e quale stella par quinci più poca,
parrebbe luna, locata con esso
come stella con stella si collòca.

Forse cotanto quanto pare appresso
alo cigner la luce che 'l dipigne
quando 'l vapor che 'l porta più è spesso,

distante intorno al punto un cerchio d'igne
si girava sì ratto, ch'avria vinto

quel moto che più tosto il mondo cigne;

e questo era d’un altro circumcinto,
e quel dal terzo, e ‘l terzo poi dal quarto,
dal quinto il quarto, e poi dal sesto il quinto.

Sopra seguiva il settimo sì sparto
già di larghezza, che ‘l messo di Iuno
intero a contenerlo sarebbe arto.

Così l’ottavo e ‘l nono; e chiascheduno
più tardo si movea, secondo ch’era
in numero distante più da l’uno;

e quello avea la fiamma più sincera
cui men distava la favilla pura,
credo, però che più di lei s’invera.

La donna mia, che mi vedëa in cura
forte sospeso, disse: «Da quel punto
depende il cielo e tutta la natura.

Mira quel cerchio che più li è congiunto;
e sappi che ‘l suo muovere è sì tosto
per l’affocato amore ond’ elli è punto».

E io a lei: «Se ‘l mondo fosse posto
con l’ordine ch’io veggio in quelle rote,
sazio m’avrebbe ciò che m’è proposto;

ma nel mondo sensibile si puote
veder le volte tanto più divine,
quant’ elle son dal centro più remote.

Onde, se ‘l mio disir dee aver fine
in questo miro e angelico templo
che solo amore e luce ha per confine,

udir convienmi ancor come l’essemplo
e l’essemplare non vanno d’un modo,

ché io per me indarno a ciò contemplo». 57

«Se li tuoi diti non sono a tal nodo
sufficïenti, non è maraviglia:
tanto, per non tentare, è fatto sodo!». 60

Così la donna mia; poi disse: «Piglia
quel ch'io ti dicerò, se vuo' saziarti;
e intorno da esso t'assottiglia. 63

Li cerchi corporai sono ampi e arti
secondo il più e 'l men de la virtute
che si distende per tutte lor parti. 66

Maggior bontà vuol far maggior salute;
maggior salute maggior corpo cape,
s'elli ha le parti igualmente compiute. 69

Dunque costui che tutto quanto rape
l'altro universo seco, corrisponde
al cerchio che più ama e che più sape: 72

per che, se tu a la virtù circonde
la tua misura, non a la parvenza
de le sustanze che t'appaion tonde, 75

tu vederai mirabil consequenza
di maggio a più e di minore a meno,
in ciascun cielo, a süa intelligenza». 78

Come rimane splendido e sereno
l'emisperio de l'aere, quando soffia
Borea da quella guancia ond' è più leno, 81

per che si purga e risolve la roffia
che pria turbava, sì che 'l ciel ne ride
con le bellezze d'ogne sua paroffia; 84

così fec'ïo, poi che mi provide
la donna mia del suo risponder chiaro,

e come stella in cielo il ver si vide.

E poi che le parole sue restaro,
non altrimenti ferro disfavilla
che bolle, come i cerchi sfavillaro.

L’incendio suo seguiva ogne scintilla;
ed eran tante, che ‘l numero loro
più che ‘l doppiar de li scacchi s’inmilla.

Io sentiva osannar di coro in coro
al punto fisso che li tiene a li ubi,
e terrà sempre, ne’ quai sempre fuoro.

E quella che vedëa i pensier dubi
ne la mia mente, disse: «I cerchi primi
t’hanno mostrato Serafi e Cherubi.

Così veloci seguono i suoi vimi,
per somigliarsi al punto quanto ponno;
e posson quanto a veder son soblimi.

Quelli altri amori che ‘ntorno li vonno,
si chiaman Troni del divino aspetto,
per che ‘l primo ternaro terminonno;

e dei saper che tutti hanno diletto
quanto la sua veduta si profonda
nel vero in che si queta ogne intelletto.

Quinci si può veder come si fonda
l’esser beato ne l’atto che vede,
non in quel ch’ama, che poscia seconda;

e del vedere è misura mercede,
che grazia partorisce e buona voglia:
così di grado in grado si procede.

L’altro ternaro, che così germoglia
in questa primavera sempiterna

che notturno Arïete non dispoglia,

perpetüalemente ‘Osanna’ sberna
con tre melode, che suonano in tree
ordini di letizia onde s’interna.

In essa gerarcia son l’altre dee:
prima Dominazioni, e poi Virtudi;
l’ordine terzo di Podestadi èe.

Poscia ne’ due penultimi tripudi
Principati e Arcangeli si girano;
l’ultimo è tutto d’Angelici ludi.

Questi ordini di sù tutti s’ammirano,
e di giù vincon sì, che verso Dio
tutti tirati sono e tutti tirano.

E Dïonisio con tanto disio
a contemplar questi ordini si mise,
che li nomò e distinse com’ io.

Ma Gregorio da lui poi si divise;
onde, sì tosto come li occhi aperse
in questo ciel, di sé medesmo rise.

E se tanto secreto ver proferse
mortale in terra, non voglio ch’ammiri:
ché chi ‘l vide qua sù gliel discoperse

con altro assai del ver di questi giri».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto ventinovesimo

Canto XXIX, ove si tratta de la superbia e cacciamento de li rei e malvagi angeli e de la dilezione e gloria de' buoni; e infine si riprende tutti coloro che predicando si partono dal santo Evangelio e dicono favole; e contiencisi in questo canto certe declaragioni di certe oscuritadi del celestiale regno.

Quando ambedue li figli di Latona,
coperti del Montone e de la Libra,
fanno de l'orizzonte insieme zona,

quant' è dal punto che 'l cenìt inlibra
infin che l'uno e l'altro da quel cinto,
cambiando l'emisperio, si dilibra,

tanto, col volto di riso dipinto,
si tacque Bëatrice, riguardando
fiso nel punto che m'avëa vinto.

Poi cominciò: «Io dico, e non dimando,
quel che tu vuoli udir, perch' io l'ho visto
là 've s'appunta ogne ubi e ogne quando.

Non per aver a sé di bene acquisto,
ch'esser non può, ma perché suo splendore
potesse, risplendendo, dir "Subsisto",

in sua etternità di tempo fore,
fuor d'ogne altro comprender, come i piacque,
s'aperse in nuovi amor l'etterno amore.

Né prima quasi torpente si giacque;
ché né prima né poscia procedette
lo discorrer di Dio sovra quest' acque.

Forma e materia, congiunte e purette,
usciro ad esser che non avia fallo,
come d'arco tricordo tre saette.

E come in vetro, in ambra o in cristallo
raggio resplende sì, che dal venire
a l’esser tutto non è intervallo,

così ‘l triforme effetto del suo sire
ne l’esser suo raggiò insieme tutto
sanza distinzïone in essordire.

Concreato fu ordine e costrutto
a le sustanze; e quelle furon cima
nel mondo in che puro atto fu produtto;

pura potenza tenne la parte ima;
nel mezzo strinse potenza con atto
tal vime, che già mai non si divima.

Ieronimo vi scrisse lungo tratto
di secoli de li angeli creati
anzi che l’altro mondo fosse fatto;

ma questo vero è scritto in molti lati
da li scrittor de lo Spirito Santo,
e tu te n’avvedrai se bene agguati;

e anche la ragione il vede alquanto,
che non concederebbe che ‘ motori
sanza sua perfezion fosser cotanto.

Or sai tu dove e quando questi amori
furon creati e come: sì che spenti
nel tuo disïo già son tre ardori.

Né giugneriesi, numerando, al venti
sì tosto, come de li angeli parte
turbò il suggetto d’i vostri alimenti.

L’altra rimase, e cominciò quest’ arte
che tu discerni, con tanto diletto,
che mai da circüir non si diparte.

Principio del cader fu il maladetto
superbir di colui che tu vedesti
da tutti i pesi del mondo costretto.

Quelli che vedi qui furon modesti
a riconoscer sé da la bontate
che li avea fatti a tanto intender presti:

per che le viste lor furo essaltate
con grazia illuminante e con lor merto,
sì c'hanno ferma e piena volontate;

e non voglio che dubbi, ma sia certo,
che ricever la grazia è meritorio
secondo che l'affetto l'è aperto.

Omai dintorno a questo consistorio
puoi contemplare assai, se le parole
mie son ricolte, sanz' altro aiutorio.

Ma perché 'n terra per le vostre scole
si legge che l'angelica natura
è tal, che 'ntende e si ricorda e vole,

ancor dirò, perché tu veggi pura
la verità che là giù si confonde,
equivocando in sì fatta lettura.

Queste sustanze, poi che fur gioconde
de la faccia di Dio, non volser viso
da essa, da cui nulla si nasconde:

però non hanno vedere interciso
da novo obietto, e però non bisogna
rememorar per concetto diviso;

sì che là giù, non dormendo, si sogna,
credendo e non credendo dicer vero;
ma ne l'uno è più colpa e più vergogna.

Voi non andate giù per un sentiero
filosofando: tanto vi trasporta
l’amor de l’apparenza e ‘l suo pensiero!

E ancor questo qua sù si comporta
con men disdegno che quando è posposta
la divina Scrittura o quando è torta.

Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa
seminarla nel mondo e quanto piace
chi umilmente con essa s’accosta.

Per apparer ciascun s’ingegna e face
sue invenzioni; e quelle son trascorse
da’ predicanti e ‘l Vangelio si tace.

Un dice che la luna si ritorse
ne la passion di Cristo e s’interpuose,
per che ‘l lume del sol giù non si porse;

e mente, ché la luce si nascose
da sé: però a li Spani e a l’Indi
come a’ Giudei tale eclissi rispuose.

Non ha Fiorenza tanti Lapi e Bindi
quante sì fatte favole per anno
in pergamo si gridan quinci e quindi:

sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno,
tornan del pasco pasciute di vento,
e non le scusa non veder lo danno.

Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento:
‘Andate, e predicate al mondo ciance’;
ma diede lor verace fondamento;

e quel tanto sonò ne le sue guance,
sì ch’a pugnar per accender la fede
de l’Evangelio fero scudo e lance.

Ora si va con motti e con iscede
a predicare, e pur che ben si rida,
gonfia il cappuccio e più non si richiede.

Ma tale uccel nel becchetto s’annida,
che se ‘l vulgo il vedesse, vederebbe
la perdonanza di ch’el si confida:

per cui tanta stoltezza in terra crebbe,
che, sanza prova d’alcun testimonio,
ad ogne promession si correrebbe.

Di questo ingrassa il porco sant’ Antonio,
e altri assai che sono ancor più porci,
pagando di moneta sanza conio.

Ma perché siam digressi assai, ritorci
li occhi oramai verso la dritta strada,
sì che la via col tempo si raccorci.

Questa natura sì oltre s’ingrada
in numero, che mai non fu loquela
né concetto mortal che tanto vada;

e se tu guardi quel che si revela
per Danïel, vedrai che ‘n sue migliaia
determinato numero si cela.

La prima luce, che tutta la raia,
per tanti modi in essa si recepe,
quanti son li splendori a chi s’appaia.

Onde, però che a l’atto che concepe
segue l’affetto, d’amar la dolcezza
diversamente in essa ferve e tepe.

Vedi l’eccelso omai e la larghezza
de l’etterno valor, poscia che tanti
speculi fatti s’ha in che si spezza,

uno manendo in sé come davanti».

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentesimo

Canto XXX, ove narra come l'auttore vidde per conducimento di Beatrice li splendori de la divinità e le seggie de l'anime de li uomini, tra le quali vide già collocata quella de lo imperadore Arrigo di Lunzimborgo con la sua corona.

Forse semilia miglia di lontano
ci ferve l'ora sesta, e questo mondo
china già l'ombra quasi al letto piano,

quando 'l mezzo del cielo, a noi profondo,
comincia a farsi tal, ch'alcuna stella
perde il parere infino a questo fondo;

e come vien la chiarissima ancella
del sol più oltre, così 'l ciel si chiude
di vista in vista infino a la più bella.

Non altrimenti il trïunfo che lude
sempre dintorno al punto che mi vinse,
parendo inchiuso da quel ch'elli 'nchiude,

a poco a poco al mio veder si stinse:
per che tornar con li occhi a Bëatrice
nulla vedere e amor mi costrinse.

Se quanto infino a qui di lei si dice
fosse conchiuso tutto in una loda,
poca sarebbe a fornir questa vice.

La bellezza ch'io vidi si trasmoda
non pur di là da noi, ma certo io credo
che solo il suo fattor tutta la goda.

Da questo passo vinto mi concedo
più che già mai da punto di suo tema
soprato fosse comico o tragedo:

ché, come sole in viso che più trema,
così lo rimembrar del dolce riso
la mente mia da me medesmo scema.

Dal primo giorno ch'i' vidi il suo viso
in questa vita, infino a questa vista,
non m'è il seguire al mio cantar preciso;

ma or convien che mio seguir desista
più dietro a sua bellezza, poetando,
come a l'ultimo suo ciascuno artista.

Cotal qual io la lascio a maggior bando
che quel de la mia tuba, che deduce
l'ardüa sua matera terminando,

con atto e voce di spedito duce
ricominciò: «Noi siamo usciti fore
del maggior corpo al ciel ch'è pura luce:

luce intellettüal, piena d'amore;
amor di vero ben, pien di letizia;
letizia che trascende ogne dolzore.

Qui vederai l'una e l'altra milizia
di paradiso, e l'una in quelli aspetti
che tu vedrai a l'ultima giustizia».

Come sùbito lampo che discetti
li spiriti visivi, sì che priva
da l'atto l'occhio di più forti obietti,

così mi circunfulse luce viva,
e lasciommi fasciato di tal velo
del suo fulgor, che nulla m'appariva.

«Sempre l'amor che queta questo cielo
accoglie in sé con sì fatta salute,
per far disposto a sua fiamma il candelo».

Non fur più tosto dentro a me venute
queste parole brievi, ch'io compresi
me sormontar di sopr' a mia virtute;

e di novella vista mi raccesi
tale, che nulla luce è tanto mera,
che li occhi miei non si fosser difesi;

e vidi lume in forma di rivera
fulvido di fulgore, intra due rive
dipinte di mirabil primavera.

Di tal fiumana uscian faville vive,
e d'ogne parte si mettien ne' fiori,
quasi rubin che oro circunscrive;

poi, come inebrïate da li odori,
riprofondavan sé nel miro gurge,
e s'una intrava, un'altra n'uscia fori.

«L'alto disio che mo t'infiamma e urge,
d'aver notizia di ciò che tu vei,
tanto mi piace più quanto più turge;

ma di quest' acqua convien che tu bei
prima che tanta sete in te si sazi»:
così mi disse il sol de li occhi miei.

Anche soggiunse: «Il fiume e li topazi
ch'entrano ed escono e 'l rider de l'erbe
son di lor vero umbriferi prefazi.

Non che da sé sian queste cose acerbe;
ma è difetto da la parte tua,
che non hai viste ancor tanto superbe».

Non è fantin che sì sùbito rua
col volto verso il latte, se si svegli
molto tardato da l'usanza sua,

come fec’ io, per far migliori spegli
ancor de li occhi, chinandomi a l’onda
che si deriva perché vi s’immegli;

e sì come di lei bevve la gronda
de le palpebre mie, così mi parve
di sua lunghezza divenuta tonda.

Poi, come gente stata sotto larve,
che pare altro che prima, se si sveste
la sembianza non süa in che disparve,

così mi si cambiaro in maggior feste
li fiori e le faville, sì ch’io vidi
ambo le corti del ciel manifeste.

O isplendor di Dio, per cu’ io vidi
l’alto trïunfo del regno verace,
dammi virtù a dir com’ ïo il vidi!

Lume è là sù che visibile face
lo creatore a quella creatura
che solo in lui vedere ha la sua pace.

E’ si distende in circular figura,
in tanto che la sua circunferenza
sarebbe al sol troppo larga cintura.

Fassi di raggio tutta sua parvenza
reflesso al sommo del mobile primo,
che prende quindi vivere e potenza.

E come clivo in acqua di suo imo
si specchia, quasi per vedersi addorno,
quando è nel verde e ne’ fioretti opimo,

sì, soprastando al lume intorno intorno,
vidi specchiarsi in più di mille soglie
quanto di noi là sù fatto ha ritorno.

E se l’infimo grado in sé raccoglie
sì grande lume, quanta è la larghezza
di questa rosa ne l’estreme foglie!

La vista mia ne l’ampio e ne l’altezza
non si smarriva, ma tutto prendeva
il quanto e ‘l quale di quella allegrezza.

Presso e lontano, lì, né pon né leva:
ché dove Dio sanza mezzo governa,
la legge natural nulla rileva.

Nel giallo de la rosa sempiterna,
che si digrada e dilata e redole
odor di lode al sol che sempre verna,

qual è colui che tace e dicer vole,
mi trasse Bëatrice, e disse: «Mira
quanto è ‘l convento de le bianche stole!

Vedi nostra città quant’ ella gira;
vedi li nostri scanni sì ripieni,
che poca gente più ci si disira.

E ‘n quel gran seggio a che tu li occhi tieni
per la corona che già v’è sù posta,
prima che tu a queste nozze ceni,

sederà l’alma, che fia giù agosta,
de l’alto Arrigo, ch’a drizzare Italia
verrà in prima ch’ella sia disposta.

La cieca cupidigia che v’ammalia
simili fatti v’ha al fantolino
che muor per fame e caccia via la balia.

E fia prefetto nel foro divino
allora tal, che palese e coverto
non anderà con lui per un cammino.

Ma poco poi sarà da Dio sofferto
nel santo officio; ch'el sarà detruso
là dove Simon mago è per suo merto,

e farà quel d'Alagna intrar più giuso».

Per l'indice, clicca qui

Canto trentunesimo

Canto XXXI, il quale tratta come l'auttore fue lasciato da Beatrice e trovò Santo Bernardo, per lo cui conducimento rivide Beatrice ne la sua gloria; poi pone una orazione che Dante fece a Beatrice che pregasse per lui lo nostro Segnore Iddio e la nostra Donna sua Madre; e come vide la Divina Maestà.

In forma dunque di candida rosa
mi si mostrava la milizia santa
che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa;

ma l'altra, che volando vede e canta
la gloria di colui che la 'nnamora
e la bontà che la fece cotanta,

sì come schiera d'ape che s'infiora
una fïata e una si ritorna
là dove suo laboro s'insapora,

nel gran fior discendeva che s'addorna
di tante foglie, e quindi risaliva
là dove 'l süo amor sempre soggiorna.

Le facce tutte avean di fiamma viva
e l'ali d'oro, e l'altro tanto bianco,
che nulla neve a quel termine arriva.

Quando scendean nel fior, di banco in banco
porgevan de la pace e de l'ardore
ch'elli acquistavan ventilando il fianco.

Né l'interporsi tra 'l disopra e 'l fiore
di tanta moltitudine volante
impediva la vista e lo splendore:

ché la luce divina è penetrante
per l'universo secondo ch'è degno,
sì che nulla le puote essere ostante.

Questo sicuro e gaudïoso regno,
frequente in gente antica e in novella,
viso e amore avea tutto ad un segno. 27

Oh trina luce che ‘n unica stella
scintillando a lor vista, sì li appaga!
guarda qua giuso a la nostra procella! 30

Se i barbari, venendo da tal plaga
che ciascun giorno d’Elice si cuopra,
rotante col suo figlio ond’ ella è vaga, 33

veggendo Roma e l’ardüa sua opra,
stupefaciensi, quando Laterano
a le cose mortali andò di sopra; 36

ïo, che al divino da l’umano,
a l’etterno dal tempo era venuto,
e di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano, 39

di che stupor dovea esser compiuto!
Certo tra esso e ‘l gaudio mi facea
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E quasi peregrin che si ricrea
nel tempio del suo voto riguardando,
e spera già ridir com’ ello stea, 45

su per la viva luce passeggiando,
menava ïo li occhi per li gradi,
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e atti ornati di tutte onestadi. 51

La forma general di paradiso
già tutta mïo sguardo avea compresa,
in nulla parte ancor fermato fiso; 54

e volgeami con voglia rïaccesa
per domandar la mia donna di cose
di che la mente mia era sospesa.

Uno intendëa, e altro mi rispuose:
credea veder Beatrice e vidi un sene
vestito con le genti glorïose.

Diffuso era per li occhi e per le gene
di benigna letizia, in atto pio
quale a tenero padre si convene.

E «Ov' è ella?», sùbito diss' io.
Ond' elli: «A terminar lo tuo disiro
mosse Beatrice me del loco mio;

e se riguardi sù nel terzo giro
dal sommo grado, tu la rivedrai
nel trono che suoi merti le sortiro».

Sanza risponder, li occhi sù levai,
e vidi lei che si facea corona
reflettendo da sé li etterni rai.

Da quella regïon che più sù tona
occhio mortale alcun tanto non dista,
qualunque in mare più giù s'abbandona,

quanto lì da Beatrice la mia vista;
ma nulla mi facea, ché süa effige
non discendëa a me per mezzo mista.

«O donna in cui la mia speranza vige,
e che soffristi per la mia salute
in inferno lasciar le tue vestige,

di tante cose quant' i' ho vedute,
dal tuo podere e da la tua bontate
riconosco la grazia e la virtute.

Tu m’hai di servo tratto a libertate
per tutte quelle vie, per tutt’ i modi
che di ciò fare avei la potestate.

La tua magnificenza in me custodi,
sì che l’anima mia, che fatt’ hai sana,
piacente a te dal corpo si disnodi».

Così orai; e quella, sì lontana
come parea, sorrise e riguardommi;
poi si tornò a l’etterna fontana.

E ‘l santo sene: «Acciò che tu assommi
perfettamente», disse, «il tuo cammino,
a che priego e amor santo mandommi,

vola con li occhi per questo giardino;
ché veder lui t’acconcerà lo sguardo
più al montar per lo raggio divino.

E la regina del cielo, ond’ ïo ardo
tutto d’amor, ne farà ogne grazia,
però ch’i’ sono il suo fedel Bernardo».

Qual è colui che forse di Croazia
viene a veder la Veronica nostra,
che per l’antica fame non sen sazia,

ma dice nel pensier, fin che si mostra:
‘Segnor mio Iesù Cristo, Dio verace,
or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?’;

tal era io mirando la vivace
carità di colui che ‘n questo mondo,
contemplando, gustò di quella pace.

«Figliuol di grazia, quest’ esser giocondo»,
cominciò elli, «non ti sarà noto,
tenendo li occhi pur qua giù al fondo;

ma guarda i cerchi infino al più remoto,
tanto che veggi seder la regina
cui questo regno è suddito e devoto». 117

Io levai li occhi; e come da mattina
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e a quel mezzo, con le penne sparte,
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ciascun distinto di fulgore e d'arte. 132

Vidi a lor giochi quivi e a lor canti
ridere una bellezza, che letizia
era ne li occhi a tutti li altri santi; 135

e s'io avessi in dir tanta divizia
quanta ad imaginar, non ardirei
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che ' miei di rimirar fé più ardenti.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentaduesimo

Canto XXXII, ove tratta come santo Bernardo mostrò a Dante ordinatamente li luoghi de' beati del Vecchio e del Nuovo Testamento; e come a la voce de l'Arcangelo Gabriello laudavano nostra Madonna, cioè la Virgine Maria.

Affetto al suo piacer, quel contemplante
libero officio di dottore assunse,
e cominciò queste parole sante:

«La piaga che Maria richiuse e unse,
quella ch'è tanto bella da' suoi piedi
è colei che l'aperse e che la punse.

Ne l'ordine che fanno i terzi sedi,
siede Rachel di sotto da costei
con Bëatrice, sì come tu vedi.

Sarra e Rebecca, Iudìt e colei
che fu bisava al cantor che per doglia
del fallo disse 'Miserere mei',

puoi tu veder così di soglia in soglia
giù digradar, com' io ch'a proprio nome
vo per la rosa giù di foglia in foglia.

E dal settimo grado in giù, sì come
infino ad esso, succedono Ebree,
dirimendo del fior tutte le chiome;

perché, secondo lo sguardo che fée
la fede in Cristo, queste sono il muro
a che si parton le sacre scalee.

Da questa parte onde 'l fiore è maturo
di tutte le sue foglie, sono assisi
quei che credettero in Cristo venturo;

da l’altra parte onde sono intercisi
di vòti i semicirculi, si stanno
quei ch’a Cristo venuto ebber li visi.

E come quinci il glorïoso scanno
de la donna del cielo e li altri scanni
di sotto lui cotanta cerna fanno,

così di contra quel del gran Giovanni,
che sempre santo ‘l diserto e ‘l martiro
sofferse, e poi l’inferno da due anni;

e sotto lui così cerner sortiro
Francesco, Benedetto e Augustino
e altri fin qua giù di giro in giro.

Or mira l’alto proveder divino:
ché l’uno e l’altro aspetto de la fede
igualmente empierà questo giardino.

E sappi che dal grado in giù che fiede
a mezzo il tratto le due discrezioni,
per nullo proprio merito si siede,

ma per l’altrui, con certe condizioni:
ché tutti questi son spiriti asciolti
prima ch’avesser vere elezïoni.

Ben te ne puoi accorger per li volti
e anche per le voci püerili,
se tu li guardi bene e se li ascolti.

Or dubbi tu e dubitando sili;
ma io discioglierò ‘l forte legame
in che ti stringon li pensier sottili.

Dentro a l’ampiezza di questo reame
casüal punto non puote aver sito,
se non come tristizia o sete o fame:

ché per etterna legge è stabilito
quantunque vedi, sì che giustamente
ci si risponde da l’anello al dito;

e però questa festinata gente
a vera vita non è sine causa
intra sé qui più e meno eccellente.

Lo rege per cui questo regno pausa
in tanto amore e in tanto diletto,
che nulla volontà è di più ausa,

le menti tutte nel suo lieto aspetto
creando, a suo piacer di grazia dota
diversamente; e qui basti l’effetto.

E ciò espresso e chiaro vi si nota
ne la Scrittura santa in quei gemelli
che ne la madre ebber l’ira commota.

Però, secondo il color d’i capelli,
di cotal grazia l’altissimo lume
degnamente convien che s’incappelli.

Dunque, sanza mercé di lor costume,
locati son per gradi differenti,
sol differendo nel primiero acume.

Bastavasi ne’ secoli recenti
con l’innocenza, per aver salute,
solamente la fede d’i parenti;

poi che le prime etadi fuor compiute,
convenne ai maschi a l’innocenti penne
per circuncidere acquistar virtute;

ma poi che ‘l tempo de la grazia venne,
sanza battesmo perfetto di Cristo
tale innocenza là giù si ritenne.

Riguarda omai ne la faccia che a Cristo
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perch’ elli è quelli che portò la palma
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carcar si volse de la nostra salma. 114

Ma vieni omai con li occhi sì com’ io
andrò parlando, e nota i gran patrici
di questo imperio giustissimo e pio.

Quei due che seggon là sù più felici
per esser propinquissimi ad Agusta,
son d’esta rosa quasi due radici:

colui che da sinistra le s’aggiusta
è il padre per lo cui ardito gusto
l’umana specie tanto amaro gusta;

dal destro vedi quel padre vetusto
di Santa Chiesa a cui Cristo le chiavi
raccomandò di questo fior venusto.

E quei che vide tutti i tempi gravi,
pria che morisse, de la bella sposa
che s’acquistò con la lancia e coi clavi,

siede lungh’ esso, e lungo l’altro posa
quel duca sotto cui visse di manna
la gente ingrata, mobile e retrosa.

Di contr’ a Pietro vedi sedere Anna,
tanto contenta di mirar sua figlia,
che non move occhio per cantare osanna;

e contro al maggior padre di famiglia
siede Lucia, che mosse la tua donna
quando chinavi, a rovinar, le ciglia.

Ma perché ‘l tempo fugge che t’assonna,
qui farem punto, come buon sartore
che com’ elli ha del panno fa la gonna;

e drizzeremo li occhi al primo amore,
sì che, guardando verso lui, penètri
quant’ è possibil per lo suo fulgore.

Veramente, ne forse tu t’arretri
movendo l’ali tue, credendo oltrarti,
orando grazia conven che s’impetri

grazia da quella che puote aiutarti;
e tu mi seguirai con l’affezione,
sì che dal dicer mio lo cor non parti».

E cominciò questa santa orazione:

Per l’indice, clicca qui

Canto trentatreesimo

Canto XXXIII, il quale è l'ultimo de la terza cantica e ultima; nel quale canto santo Bernardo in figura de l'auttore fa una orazione a la Vergine Maria, pregandola che sé e la Divina Maestade si lasci vedere visibilemente.

«Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo figlio,
umile e alta più che creatura,
termine fisso d'etterno consiglio,

tu se' colei che l'umana natura
nobilitasti sì, che 'l suo fattore
non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.

Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'amore,
per lo cui caldo ne l'etterna pace
così è germinato questo fiore.

Qui se' a noi meridïana face
di caritate, e giuso, intra ' mortali,
se' di speranza fontana vivace.

Donna, se' tanto grande e tanto vali,
che qual vuol grazia e a te non ricorre,
sua disïanza vuol volar sanz' ali.

La tua benignità non pur soccorre
a chi domanda, ma molte fïate
liberamente al dimandar precorre.

In te misericordia, in te pietate,
in te magnificenza, in te s'aduna
quantunque in creatura è di bontate.

Or questi, che da l'infima lacuna
de l'universo infin qui ha vedute
le vite spiritali ad una ad una,

supplica a te, per grazia, di virtute
tanto, che possa con li occhi levarsi
più alto verso l’ultima salute.

E io, che mai per mio veder non arsi
più ch’i’ fo per lo suo, tutti miei prieghi
ti porgo, e priego che non sieno scarsi,

perché tu ogne nube li disleghi
di sua mortalità co’ prieghi tuoi,
sì che ‘l sommo piacer li si dispieghi.

Ancor ti priego, regina, che puoi
ciò che tu vuoli, che conservi sani,
dopo tanto veder, li affetti suoi.

Vinca tua guardia i movimenti umani:
vedi Beatrice con quanti beati
per li miei prieghi ti chiudon le mani!».

Li occhi da Dio diletti e venerati,
fissi ne l’orator, ne dimostraro
quanto i devoti prieghi le son grati;

indi a l’etterno lume s’addrizzaro,
nel qual non si dee creder che s’invii
per creatura l’occhio tanto chiaro.

E io ch’al fine di tutt’ i disii
appropinquava, sì com’ io dovea,
l’ardor del desiderio in me finii.

Bernardo m’accennava, e sorridea,
perch’ io guardassi suso; ma io era
già per me stesso tal qual ei volea:

ché la mia vista, venendo sincera,
e più e più intrava per lo raggio
de l’alta luce che da sé è vera.

Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
che ‘l parlar mostra, ch’a tal vista cede,
e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio.

Qual è colüi che sognando vede,
che dopo ‘l sogno la passione impressa
rimane, e l’altro a la mente non riede,

cotal son io, ché quasi tutta cessa
mia visïone, e ancor mi distilla
nel core il dolce che nacque da essa.

Così la neve al sol si disigilla;
così al vento ne le foglie levi
si perdea la sentenza di Sibilla.

O somma luce che tanto ti levi
da’ concetti mortali, a la mia mente
ripresta un poco di quel che parevi,

e fa la lingua mia tanto possente,
ch’una favilla sol de la tua gloria
possa lasciare a la futura gente;

ché, per tornare alquanto a mia memoria
e per sonare un poco in questi versi,
più si conceperà di tua vittoria.

Io credo, per l’acume ch’io soffersi
del vivo raggio, ch’i’ sarei smarrito,
se li occhi miei da lui fossero aversi.

E’ mi ricorda ch’io fui più ardito
per questo a sostener, tanto ch’i’ giunsi
l’aspetto mio col valore infinito.

Oh abbondante grazia ond’ io presunsi
ficcar lo viso per la luce etterna,
tanto che la veduta vi consunsi!

Nel suo profondo vidi che s’interna,
legato con amore in un volume,
ciò che per l’universo si squaderna:

sustanze e accidenti e lor costume
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo
che ciò ch’i’ dico è un semplice lume.

La forma universal di questo nodo
credo ch’i’ vidi, perché più di largo,
dicendo questo, mi sento ch’i’ godo.

Un punto solo m’è maggior letargo
che venticinque secoli a la ‘mpresa
che fé Nettuno ammirar l’ombra d’Argo.

Così la mente mia, tutta sospesa,
mirava fissa, immobile e attenta,
e sempre di mirar faceasi accesa.

A quella luce cotal si diventa,
che volgersi da lei per altro aspetto
è impossibil che mai si consenta;

però che ‘l ben, ch’è del volere obietto,
tutto s’accoglie in lei, e fuor di quella
è defettivo ciò ch’è lì perfetto.

Omai sarà più corta mia favella,
pur a quel ch’io ricordo, che d’un fante
che bagni ancor la lingua a la mammella.

Non perché più ch’un semplice sembiante
fosse nel vivo lume ch’io mirava,
che tal è sempre qual s’era davante;

ma per la vista che s’avvalorava
in me guardando, una sola parvenza,
mutandom’ io, a me si travagliava.

Ne la profonda e chiara sussistenza
de l’alto lume parvermi tre giri
di tre colori e d’una contenenza;

e l’un da l’altro come iri da iri
parea reflesso, e ‘l terzo parea foco
che quinci e quindi igualmente si spiri.

Oh quanto è corto il dire e come fioco
al mio concetto! e questo, a quel ch’i’ vidi,
è tanto, che non basta a dicer ‘poco’.

O luce etterna che sola in te sidi,
sola t’intendi, e da te intelletta
e intendente te ami e arridi!

Quella circulazion che sì concetta
pareva in te come lume reflesso,
da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,

dentro da sé, del suo colore stesso,
mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
per che ‘l mio viso in lei tutto era messo.

Qual è ‘l geomètra che tutto s’affige
per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova,
pensando, quel principio ond’ elli indige,

tal era io a quella vista nova:
veder voleva come si convenne
l’imago al cerchio e come vi s’indova;

ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne:
se non che la mia mente fu percossa
da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne.

A l’alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
ma già volgeva il mio disio e ‘l velle,
sì come rota ch’igualmente è mossa,

l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle.

Per l’indice, clicca qui

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EGLOGHE

Queste sono due componimenti di carattere bucolico scritti in lingua latina tra il 1319 ed il 1320 a Ravenna e pubblicate per la prima volta a Firenze nel 1719.

Le egloghe, rispettivamente Vidimus in migris albo patiente lituris di 68 versi e Velleribus Colchis prepes detectus Eous di 97 versi, sono composte sotto forma di esametro e si rivolgono a Giovanni del Virgilio, lettore di poesia latina presso l'Università di Bologna, che con una epistola di carattere oraziano, il Pyeridum vox alma, novis qui cantibus orbem, invitava il poeta del "carmen laicum" disprezzato dai dotti, cioè la Commedia, a scrivere un "carmen vatisonum", cioè un carme di carattere eroico, per conquistarsi i letterati e ottenere la corona d'alloro.

Dante risponde al letterato con un'egloga di tipo virgiliano dove immagina che il pastore Titiro (nome sotto il quale si nasconde Dante stesso) e Melibeo (il giovane Dino Perini esule fiorentino) mentre si trovano a pascolare il gregge ricevono l'epistola di Mopso (nome fittizio di Giovanni del Virgilio). A Melibeo che vuole conoscere il contenuto della missiva, Titiro dice che il maestro lo invita a cingersi d'alloro e aggiunge che ne sarebbe felice ma non a Bologna e per il genere di poesia che vorrebbe il dotto, ma sulle rive dell'Arno e per la sua Commedia.

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I. DANTES ALAGHERII IOHANNI DE VIRGILIO

Vidimus in nigris albo patiente lituris
Pyerio demulsa sinu modulamina nobis.
Forte recensentes pastas de more capellas
tunc ego sub quercu meus et Melibeus eramus.
Ille quidem, cupiebat enim consciscere cantum,
«Tityre, quid Mopsus? Quid vult? Edissere» dixit.
Ridebam, Mopse; magis et magis ille premebat.
Victus amore sui, posito vix denique risu,
«Stulte, quid insanis?» inquam: «Tua cura capelle
te potius poscunt, quanquam mala cenula turbet.
Pascua sunt ignota tibi que Menalus alto
vertice declivi celator solis inumbrat,
herbarum vario florumque inpicta colore.
Circuit hec humilis et tectus fronde saligna
perpetuis undis a summo margine ripas
rorans alveolus, qui, quas mons desuper edit,
sponte viam, qua mitis erat, se fecit aquarum.
Mopsus in his, dum lenta boves per gramina ludunt,
contemplatur ovans hominum superumque labores;
inde per inflatos calamos interna recludit
gaudia, sic ut dulce melos armenta sequantur,
placatique ruant campis de monte leones,
et refluant unde, frondes et Menala nutent».
«Tityre», tunc «si Mopsus» ait «decantat in herbis
ignotis, ignora tamen sua carmina possum,
te monstrante, meis vagulis prodiscere capris».
Hic ego quid poteram, cum sic instaret anhelus?
«Montibus Aoniis Mopsus, Melibee, quot annis,
dum satagunt alii causarum iura doceri,
se dedit et sacri memoris perpalluit umbra.
Vatificis prolutus aquis, et lacte canoro
viscera plena ferens et plenus ad usque palatum,
me vocat ad frondes versa Peneyde cretas».
«Quid facies?» Melibeus ait: «Tu tempora lauro
semper inornata per pascua pastor habebis?».
«O Melibee, decus vatum, quoque nomen in auras

fluxit, et insomnem vix Mopsum Musa peregit»;
retuleram, cum sic dedit indignatio vocem:
«Quantos balatus colles et prata sonabunt,
si viridante coma fidibus peana ciebo!
Sed timean saltus et rura ignara deorum.
Nonne triumphales melius pexare capillos
et patrio, redeam si quando, abscondere canos
fronde sub inserta solitum flavescere Sarno?».
Ille: «Quis hoc dubitet? Propter quod respice tempus,
Tityre, quam velox; nam iam senuere capelle
quas concepturis dedimus nos matribus hircos».
Tunc ego: «Cum mundi circumflua corpora cantu
astricoleque meo, velut infera regna, patebunt,
devincire caput hedere lauroque iuvabit:
concedat Mopsus». «Mopsus» tunc ille «quid?» inquit.
«Comica nonne vides ipsum reprehendere verba,
tum quia femineo resonant ut trita labello,
tum quia Castalias pudet acceptare sorores?»
ipse ego respondi, versus iterumque relegi,
Mopse, tuos. Tunc ille humeros contraxit et «Ergo
quid faciemus» ait «Mopsum revocare volentes?».
«Est mecum quam noscis ovis gratissima», dixi
«ubera vix que ferre potest, tam lactis abundans;
rupe sub ingenti carptas modo ruminat herbas.
Nuli iuncta gregi nullis assuetaque caulis,
sponte venire solet, numquam vi, poscere mulctram.
Hanc ego prestolor manibus mulgere paratis,
hac implebo decem missurus vascula Mopso.
Tu tamen interdum capros meditere petulcos
et duris crustis discas infigere dentes».
Talia sub quercu Melibeus et ipse canebam,
parva tabernacla nobis dum farra coquebant.

II. DANTES ALAGHERII IOHANNI DE VIRGILIO

Velleribus Colchis prepes detectus Eous
alipedesque alii pulcrum Titana ferebant.
Orbita, qua primum flecti de culmine cepit,
currigerum canthum libratim quemque tenebat;
resque refulgentes, solite superarier umbris,
vincebant umbras et fervere rura sinebant.
Tityrus hoc propter confugit et Alphesibeus
ad silvam, pecudumque suique misertus uterque,
fraxineam silvam tiliis platanisque frequentem.
Et dum silvestri pecudes mixteque capelle
insidunt herbe, dum naribus aera captant,
Tityrus, hic annosus enim, defensus acerna
fronde soporifero gravis incumbebat odori;
nodosoque piri vulso de stirpe bacillo
stabat subnixus, ut diceret, Alphesibeus.
«Quod mentes hominum» fabatur «ad astra ferantur,
unde fuere, nove cum corpora nostra subirent;
quod pisces coeant pelagi pelagusque relinquant
flumina qua primum Nerei confinia tangunt;
Caucason Hyrcane maculent quod sanguine tigres,
et Libies coluber quod squama verrat arenas,
non miror, nam cuique placent conformia vite,
Tityre; sed Mopso miror, mirantur et omnes
pastores alii mecum Sicula arva tenentes,
arida Ciclopum placeant quod saxa sub Ethna».
Dixerat, et calidus et gutture tardus anhelo
iam Melibeus adest et vix «En, Tityre» dixit.
Inrisere senes iuvenilia guttura, quantum
Sergestum e scopulo vulsum risere Sicani.
Tum senior viridi canum de cespite crinem
sustulit et patulis efflanti naribus infit:
«O nimium iuvenis, que te nova causa coegit
pectoreos cursu rapido sic angere folles?».
Ille nichil contra, sed, quam tunc ipse tenebat,
cannea cum tremulis coniuncta est fistula labris,
sibilus hinc simplex avidas non venit ad aures,

verum, ut arundinea puer is pro voce laborat,
mira loquar, sed vera tamen, spiravit arundo:
Forte sub inriguos colles, ubi Sarpina Rheno;
et, tria si flasset ultra spiramina flata,
centum carminibus tacitos mulcebat agrestes.
Tityrus et secum conceperat Alphesibeus,
Tityron et voces compellant Alphesibei:
«Sic, venerande senex, tu roscida rura Pelori
deserere auderes, antrum Ciclopis iturus?».
Ille: «Quid hoc dubitas? Quid me, carissime, tentas?».
«Quid dubito? Quid tento?» refert tunc Alphesibeus:
«Tibia non sentis quod fit virtute canora
numinis et similis natis de murmure cannis,
murmure pandenti turpissima tempora regis
qui iussu Bromii Pactolida tinxit arenam?
Quod vocet ad litus Ethneo pumice tectum,
fortunate senex, falso ne crede favori,
et Driadum miserere loci pecorumque tuorum.
Te iuga, te saltus nostri, te flumina flebunt
absentem et Mymphe mecum peiora timentes,
et cadet invidia quam nunc habet ipse Pachynus;
nos quoque pastores te cognovisse pigebit.
Fortunate senex, fontes et pabula nota
desertare tuo vivaci nomine nolis».
«O plus quam media merito pars pectoris huius»
(atque suum tetigit) longevus Tityrus inquit,
«Mopsus amore pari mecum connexus ob illas
que male gliscentem timide fugere Pyreneum,
litora dextra Pado ratus a Rubicone sinistra
me colere, Emilida qua terminat Adria terram,
litoris Ethnei commendat pascua nobis,
nescius in tenera quod nos duo degimus herba
Trinacride montis, quo non fecundius alter
montibus in Siculis pecudes armentaque pavit.
Sed quanquam viridi sint postpondea Pelori
Ethnica saxa solo, Mopsum visurus adirem,
hic grege dimisso, ni te, Polipheme, timerem».
«Quis Poliphemon» ait «non horreat» Alphesibeus
«assuetum rictus humano sanguine tingui,

tempore iam ex illo quando Galathea relicti
Acidis heu miseri discerpere viscera vidit?
Vix illa evasit: an vis valuisset amoris,
effera dum rabies tanta perferbuit ira?
Quid, quod Achemenides, sociorum cede cruentum
tantum prospiciens, animam vix claudere quivit?
A, mea vita, precor, numquam tam dira voluptas
te premat, ut Rhenus et Nayas illa recludat
hoc illustre caput, cui iam frondator in alta virgine
perpetuas festinat cernere frondes».
Tityrus arridens et tota mente secundus
verba gregis magni tacitus concepit alumni.
Sed quia tam proni scindebant ethra iugales,
ut rem quamque sua iam multum vinceret umbra,
virgiferi, silvis gelida cum valle relictis,
post pecudes rediere suas, hirteque capelle,
inde velut reduces ad mollia prata, preibant.
Callidus interea iuxta latitavit Iollas,
omnia qui didicit, qui retulit omnia nobis:
ille quidem nobis, et nos tibi, Mopse, poymus.

COMPONIMENTI DI GIOVANNI DEL VIRGILIO

Questi sono i due componimenti di Giovanni del Virgilio a cui Dante rispose con le due egloghe.

I. IOHANNES DE VIRGILIO DANTI ALAGHERII

Pyeridum vox
alma, novis qui cantibus orbem
mulces letifluum, vitali tollere ramo
dum cupis, evolvens triplicis confinia sortis
indita pro meritis animarum, sontibus Orcum,
astripetis Lethem, epyphebia regna beatis,
tanta quid heu semper iactabis seria vulgo,
el nos pallentes nichil ex te vate legemus?
Ante quidem cythara pandum delphyna movebit
Davus et ambigue Sphyngos problemata solvet,
Tartareum preceps quam gens ydiota figuret
et segreta poli vix experata Platoni:
que tamen in triviis nunquam digesta coaxat
comicomus nebulo, qui Flaccum pelleret orbe.
«Non loquor his, ymo studio callentibus», inquis.
Carmine sed laico: clerus vulgaria tempnit,
et si non varient, cum sint ydiomata mille.
Preterea nullus, quos inter es agmine sextus,
nec quem consequeris celo, sermone forensi
descripsit. Quare, censor liberrime vatum,
fabor, si fandi paulum concedis habenas.
Nec margaritas profliga prodigus apris,
nec preme Castalias indigna veste sorores;
at, precor, ore cie que te distinguere possint
carmine valisono, sorti comunis utrique.
Et iam multa tuis lucem narratibus orant:
dic age quo petiit Iovis armiger astra volatu,
dic age quos flores, que lilia fregit arator,
dic Frigios damas laceratos dente molosso,
dic Ligurum montes et classes Parthenopeas,
carmine quo possis Alcide tangere Gades
et quo te refluus relegens mirabitur Hyster,

et Pharos et quondam regnum te noscet Helysse.
Si te fama iuvat, parvo te limite septum
non contentus eris, nec vulgo iudice tolli.
En ego iam primus, si dignum duxeris esse,
clericus Aonidum, vocalis verna Maronis,
promere gimnasiis te delectabor ovantum
inclita Peneis redolentem tempora sertis,
ut prevectus equo sibi plaudit preco sonorus
festa trophea ducis populo pretendere leto.
Iam michi bellisonis horrent clangoribus aures:
quid pater Apeninus hiat? quid concitat equor
Tirrenum Nereus? quid Mars infrendet utroque?
Tange chelim, tantos hominum compesce labores.
Ni canis hec, alios ad te pendendo, poeta
omnibus ut solus dicas, indicta manebunt.
Si tamen Eridani michi spem mediamne dedisti
quod visare notis me dignareris amicis,
nec piget enerves numeros legisse priorem
quos strepit arguto temerarius anser olori,
respondere velis, aut solvere vota, magister.

II. IOHANNES DE VIRGILIO DANTI ALAGHERII. ECLOGA RESPONSIVA

Forte sub inriguos colles, ubi Sarpina Rheno
obvia fit, viridi niveos interlita crines
nympha procax, fueram nativo conditus antro.
Frondentes ripas tondebant sponte iuvenci,
mollia carpebant agne, dumosa capelle.
Quid facerem? Nam solus eram puer incola silve:
irruerant alii causis adigentibus urbem,
nec luci Nisa michi nec respondebat Alexis,
suetus uterque comes. Calamos moderabar ydraules
falce recurvella, cuncte solamina, quando
litoris Adriaci resonantem Tityron umbra,
qua dense longo pretexunt ordine pinus
pascua, porrecte celo genioque locali,
alida myrtetis et humi florentibus herbis,
quaque nec arentes Aries fluvialis arenas
esse sinit, molli dum postulat equora villo,
retulit ipse michi flantis leve sibilus Euri,
quo vocalis odor per Menala celsa profusus
balsamat auditus et lac distillat in ora,
quale nec a longo meminerunt tempore mulsum
custodes gregium, quanquam tamen Archades omnes.
Archades exultant audito carmine Nymphe
pastoresque boves et oves hirteque capelle
arrectisque onagri decursant auribus ipsi:
ipsi etiam Fauni saliunt de colle Licei.
Et mecum: «Si cantat oves et Tityrus hircos
aut armenta trahit, quianam civile canebas
urbe sedens carmen, quando hoc Benacia quondam
pastorale sonans detrivit fistula labrum?
Audiat in silvis et te cantare bubulcum».
Nec mora, depostis calami maioribus, inter
arripio tenues et labris flantibus hysco.
A, divine senex, a sic eris alter ab illo!
Alter es, aut idem, Samio si credere vati
sic liceat Mopso, sicut liceat Melibeo.

Eheu pulvereo quod stes in tegmine scabro
et merito indignans singultes pascua Sarni
rapta tuis gregibus, ingrate dedecus urbi,
humectare genas lacrimarum flumine Mopso
parce tuo, nec te crucia crudelis et illum,
cuius amor tantum, tantum complectitur, inquam,
iam te, blande senex, quanto circunligat ulmum
proceram vitim per centum vincula nexu.
O si quando sacros iterum flavescere canos
fonte tuo videas et ab ipsa Phillide pexos,
quam visando tuas tegetes miraberis uvas!
Ast intermedium pariat ne tedia tempus
letitie, spectare potes quibus otior antris
et mecum pausare. Simul cantabimus ambo:
ipse levi calamo, sed tu gravitate magistrum
firmius insinuans, ne quem sua deserat etas.
Ut venias, locus ipse vocat: fons humidus intus
antra rigat, que saxa tegunt, virgulta flabellant;
circiter origanum redolet; quoque causa soporis
herba papaveris est, oblivia, qualiter aiunt,
grata creans; serpylla tibi substernet Alexis,
quem Corydon vocet ipse rogent; tibi Nisa lavabit
ipsa pedes accinta libens cenamque parabit;
Testilis hec inter piperino polvere fungos
condiet, et permixta doment multa allia, si quos
forsitan inprudens Melibeus legerit hortis;
ut comedas apium memorabunt mella susurri;
poma leges Niseque genas equantia mandes,
pluraque servabis nimio defensa decore.
Iamque superserpunt hedere radicibus antrum,
serta parata tibi. Nulla est cessura voluptas.
Huc ades: hue venient, qui te pervisere gliscent,
Parrhasii iuvenesque senes, et carmina leti
qui nova mirari cupiantque antiqua doceri.
Hi tibi silvestres capreas, hi tergora lincum
orbiculata ferent, tuus ut Melibeus amabat.
Huc ades, et nostros timeas neque, Tityre, saltus;
namque fidem celse concusso vertice pinus
glandifereque etiam quercusque arbusta cedere.

Non hic insidie, non hic iniuria, quantas
esse putas. Non ipse michi te fidis amanti?
sunt forsan mea regna tibi despecta ? Sed ipsi
di non erubuere cavis habitare sub antris:
testis Achilleus Chyron et pastor Apollo.
Mopse, quid es demens? Quia non permittet Iollas
comis el urbanus, dum sunt tua rustica dona,
hisque tabernaclis non est modo tutius antrum,
quis potius ludat. Sed te quis mentis anhelum
ardor agit, vel que pedibus nova nata cupido?
Miratur puerum virgo, puer ipse volucrem,
et volucris silvas et silve flamina verna;
Tityre, te Mopsus: miratio gignit amorem.
Me contempne: sitim frigio Musone levabo,
scilicet, hoc nescis? fluvio potabor avito.
Quid tamen interea mugit mea bucula circum?
quadrifluumne gravat coxis humentibus uber?
Sic reor: en propero situlas inplere capaces
lacte novo, quo dura queant mollescere frusta.
Ad mulctrale veni, si tot mandabimus illi
vascula, quot nobis promisit Tityrus ipse.
Sed lac pastori fors est mandare superbum.
Dum loquor, en comites, et sol de monte rotabat.

EGLOGHE ED ALTRI VERSI LATINI (TRADUZIONE) di Filippo Scolari

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ALTRI VERSI LATINI

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EGLOGHE

Giovanni del Virgilio a Dante Allighieri, Epistola

Delle Muse alma voce, che di nuovi
Canti l'inferno orbe ricrei, con fronda
Vitale a ripurgarlo, il trino stato
Mentre svolgi, che fisso è degli estinti
Al merto; l'Orco ai peccatori, a' spirti
Sospirosi del cielo il leteo fiume,
Ed a' beati i regni al sol di sopra;
A che sempre vorrai cose sì gravi
Gittar al vulgo? E noi da studio emunti,
Nulla di te poeta leggeremo?

Di Davo muoverà prima la cetra
Il ricurvo delfin; prima gli enimmi
Svolger potrà della fallace Sfinge,
Che la gente idiota raffiguri
Il Tartaro profondo, e quell'arcane
Sedi del ciel, che Plato attinse appena,
E che pur non digeste, gracidando
Il comico buffon, che Flacco aborre,
Canta sul trivio. —

E tu dirai: Non parlo
Di tai cose a costor, ma solo ai dotti.
Sì; ma in carme laicale, e il clero sprezza
Quanti, eguali anche sien, mille i dialetti.
Arroge: niun di lor, cui sesto assidi,
Nè quegli, cui nel ciel tieni sì presso,
In lingua popolar scrisse giammai.
Lo perchè liberissimo censore
Di vati parlerò; se pur al dire
La briglia alquanto d'allentar concedi.

Prodigo a' porci non gittar le perle,
Nè manto vil prema le Dee Castalie.
Ben ti prego cantar cose, che illustre
Te possan far con verso a tutti conto.

Chè molte già dal tuo narrar la vita
Chiedon le imprese. Or via, narra di Giove
Dove al ciel si levò l'Aquila ultrice;
Narra su via quai fiori e quali gigli
L'arator franse; da canino dente
Narra le frigie damme lacerate,
Narra i liguri monti, e di Partenope
Le flotte con tal carme, onde tu possa
Toccar d'Alcide le colonne, e l'Istro
Usato a refluir ti legga e ammiri,
E te il Faro conosca, e te l'antico
Della misera Dido estinto regno.
Se la fama ti giovi, a breve cerchio
Contento non starai, nè ti fia grato
Di giudice vulgar cogliere il plauso.

Io, se degno men credi, eccoti io primo,
Qual cherco delle Muse, e del sonante
Maron valletto, del ginnasio a tutti
Godrò mostrarti di Penea corona
Dei vincitori al paro incoronato
Ambe le tempie, ed olezzante; io, come
Sovra destriero banditor sonoro,
Che a sè medesmo plaude, i fatti egregi
Nell'annunziar al popolo festante.

E l'orecchio di già suoni guerreschi
Mi percuotono orrendi. E a che sospira
Il gran padre Apennino? Il mar Tirreno
A che provoca mai? ed a che freme
L'un Marte e l'altro? — Ah! tocca pur la cetra,
E pon di tanti alle fatiche un freno.

Se non canti di ciò, gli altri poeti,
Sospesi in aspettar che solo a tutti
Tu ne pigli a cantar, tutto in oblio
Lascieranno cader.

Pur, la speranza
Poichè mi desti di veder le sponde
Dell’Eridàno, e di cortesi note
Concedermi l’onor, se non t’incresce
D’aver pria letto questi carmi imbelli,
Che a cigno arguto un papero s’arrischia
Di sussurrar, maestro, o mi rispondi,
O non voler delusi i voti miei.

Dante Allighieri a Giovanni del Virgilio, Egloga I *Mopso e Titiro.*

Giunger a noi vedemmo in negre note
Da bianco foglio sopportati carmi,
Che altri spremeva da Pierio petto;
E intenti a noverar, qual è costume,
Le già pasciute pecorelle, meco
Sotto una quercia Melibeo giaceva.
M.
Ed ei, che pur bramava unirsi al canto: Titiro, disse, che mai vuoisi Mopso?
Tu ce lo narra.

T.
O Mopso, io ne rideva:
Ma quegli e più più davami stretta.
Io vinto dall'amor che per lui sento, E alfin deposto, a mala pena, il riso: Stolto, gli dico, e qual follia ti prende?
Te chiedono piuttosto le caprette,
Che son pur la tua cura, ancor che magra La cenetta t'attristi. Ignoti affatto Ti sono i paschi, che coll'alte cime Nasconditor del sol Menalo adombra, Ed àn vario color, d'erbe e di fiori.
Un fossatello umil di salci al rezzo Lor va d'intorno e con onda perpetua, Che dall'alto gli vien, bagna sue sponde.
Egli all'acqua, che d'alto il monte stilla, Fece da sè la via per correr mite.
Mopso in tai paschi, mentre i buoi scherzando Vanno fra l'erbe molli, osserva lieto Le fatiche de' numi e degli eroi:
Poi dell'alma il gioir versa, e dà fiato Alla siringa sua, sì che gli armenti Seguano il dolce suono, ed i leoni Si calino dal monte al pian placati, E rifluiscan l'onde, e delle piante Le fronde, e plaudan le Menalie vette.

M.
Titiro, ei disse allor, se Mopso canta In prati ignoti, io pur suoi versi ignoti Potrò colla tua scorta agli sviati
Miei capretti insegnar: or, s'ei bramoso Pregava sì, che farmi io mai poteva?

T.

Mopso già da molti anni, o Melibeo, Diedesi ai monti Aonii, e mentre gli altri
Brigansi d’insegnar il civil dritto, Impallidì de’ boschi sacri all’ombra.
Ei, d’onda aonia e di canoro latte
Sparso, m’invita alle cresciute fronde Della mutata figlia di Peneo.

M.
Or che farai? Melibeo disse. Adunque Disadorno pastor pei paschi andrai
Non d’alloro le tempie incoronato?

T.
O Melibeo, l’ onor dei vati è gito
In aria omai, e Mopso a gran fatica Fu dalla Musa sostenuto insonne.
Io detto avea, quando la voce irruppe Dello sdegno così: per colli e prati Quanto belar, quando recinto il crine Del verde lauro in sulle corde il suono Desterò del Peana! Eppur mai sempre Gl’ignari degli Dei campi e foreste Io temerò. Le chiome trïonfante
Aggiustar non fia meglio, allor ch’io torni, Bench’uso a biondeggiar, col crin canuto Cinto di verde fronda all’Arno in riva?

M.
Ed ei: chi mai può dubitarne? Or dunque Titiro bada, che veloce è il tempo, Ed invecchiaro omai le pecorelle
Figlie dei capri, che alle madri demmo.

T.
Risposi allor: quando nel canto mio Al mondo intorno gli scorrenti corpi, E mostri avrò gli abitator del cielo, Come gl’inferni regni, allora il capo Grato cinger mi fia di lauro e d’edra.
Mopso me lo concede?

M.
Ed ei: che Mopso?
Forse non sai ch’egli riprende al vivo Il comico parlar, sì perchè suona
Tutto vulgar sulla femminea bocca;
Sì perchè d’accettarlo hanno vergogna Le Castalie sorelle?

T.
Anch’io, risposi;
E intanto i versi tuoi, Mopso, rilessi.

M.
Ed egli allor strinse le spalle, e, dunque, Disse, che ne farem, volendo a Mopso Dar la risposta?

T.
Ho meco, io dissi, quella Pecorella gratissima, lo sai,
Che trar le poppe appena puote, tanto Di latte abbonda, ed or sotto l'ingente Rupe rumina l'erbe or or brucate.
A gregge alcun non appartiene, a stalla Veruna non è avvezza, ha per costume Venirmi presso, nè giammai per forza S'avvicina alla secchia: io di mia mano Per suo sollievo a mungerla son presto, E qui dieci empirò vasi di latte, Che a Mopso manderò.

M.
Sia pur; tu intanto
Bada ai lascivi capri, e impara il dente A bene esercitar su dure croste.

T.

Sotto la quercia tali Melibeo
Versi, ed io pur, cantava: il farro intanto Ne si cuoceva nell’umìl capanna.

Giovanni del Virgilio a Dante Allighieri, Egloga responsiva

Mopso.

Sott’esso a caso ai colli irrigui, dove
Macchiata variamente il niveo crine
Ninfa procace la Savena incontra
Il verde Reno, addentro il nativo antro
Chiuso m’aveano — I giovani torelli
A lor posta pascean le rive erbose;
L’agne mordean le tenerelle fronde,
I capri i dumi, ed io che far potea...,
Se in quella selva io solo era, e garzone?
Amor di liti alla città condotti
Avea ben altri a turba, ed a quel tempo
Nè Nisa a me, nè rispondeva Alessi,
Usi a seguirmi entrambi; io col ricurvo
Ferro le canne idrauliche temprava,
Solo conforto alle mie cure — ed ecco
Titiro risuonar lunghesso il lido
D’Adria, fra il rezzo dell’ombre gradite,
Che i densi pini in lungo ordine posti,
E levandosi al ciel, gittan sui prati,
Al genio sacri del loco natio,
Mentre spargon di mirto olezzo, e il suolo
D’erbe odorose e fior vestono a nembo;
Là ‘ve il monton fluviatile non lascia
Asciutte mai l’arene, e va del mare
Colle morbide lane a cercar l’onde;
Ei stesso mi recò dell’aleggiante
Euro il leggero sibilo, per cui
Sulle cime del Menalo soave
Spandesi l’armonia, che dell’udito
E balsamo, ed in bocca il latte stilla,
Tal che premuto non ricordan mai
Della gregge i pastor, che pur d’Arcadia
Sono già tutti. In ascoltar quei versi
Gli Arcadi intanto esultano, e le Ninfe

E i pastori, ed i bovi, e gli agni, e l’irte
Caprette, e gli asinelli, che pur essi
Dansi a correr qua e là con tese orecchie:
I Fauni stessi del Liceo pei gioghi
Danzan giocondamente.

M.

Io fra me stesso:
Se canta, dissi, Titiro le agnelle, E tragge dietro a sè capri ed armenti, Perchè cantasti tu di civil carme
Nella città sedendo, quando mai
Un tempo del Benaco la zampogna
Con suono pastoral presse il tuo labbro?
Te pur bifolco oda cantar ne’ boschi.

Nè più ci volle, le maggiori canne
Deposte, dò di piglio alle mezzane,
Ed a rigonfie labbra il fiato infondo.
Così, vecchio divin, così sarai, Da lui venuto, un altro lui (che certo Tu se’ il medesmo o il pari a lui, se al samio Vate creder dobbiam) e tanto a Mopso
Sia conceduto, quanto e’ fu concesso
A Melibeo. Ahimè! che tu ten giaccia Sott’esso polveroso e rozzo tetto,
E sdegnoso a ragion, che tu sospiri
Tolti alla greggia tua dell’Arno i paschi, Dell’ingrata città con vitupero,
Non dirlo a Mopso, e non voler che versi Le gote ad irrigar di pianto un fiume!
Non tormentar te stesso, ed egli insieme, Di cui tanto è l’amor, tanto ti stringe,
Mel credi pure, amabil veglio, al seno, Quanto legasi intorno ad olmo eccelso
Con cento nodi la pampinea vite.
Oh! se giorno verrà, che a te ridoni
Nel tuo fonte veder la tua canuta
E sacra chioma biondeggiar di nuovo,
Dalla tua stessa Fille in ordin posta, Quanto stupor di tue capanne algose
Ti prenderà! Tu nel frattempo or dunque Togliti al tedio, e alla letizia attendi.
Vieni con me, che il puoi, vieni a posarti Degli ozii miei negli antri amati, e meco Prendi a cantar; noi canteremo entrambi.
Io con lieve zampogna, e tu con grave; Maestro mi sarai, come s’addice
All’età di ciascun. Vedi, egli stesso T’invita il luogo mio; l’umido fonte
Dentro irriga lo speco, a cui fa tetto Grosso macigno, ed i virgulti ombrello.

L’origano all’intorno olezza, e induce Il papavero al sonno, onde un oblio
Che i sensi molce, di serpillo un letto Alessi stenderà dove corcarti.
Io stesso Coridon perché lo chiami
Ne pregherò; Nisa a lavarti i piedi
S’accingerà gentile, indi la cena
Appresterà. Da Testili conditi Saran con pepe i funghi, e ben difesi La mercè d’aglio molto, a caso mai
Che l’imprudente Melibeo n’avesse
Mal trascelto talun nei florid’orti.
Con lor grato ronzio l’api frattanto Il mele t’offriranno; e tu corrai
Tra le poma le belle; altre gustate
Di Nisa le dirai pari alle guance;
D’altre, difese dalla gran bellezza,
Farai conserva, e non saran le meno.

Ed ecco serpeggiar colle radici
L’ellera all’antro sopra, a farti un serto: Nè qui manco verrà diletto alcuno.
Or vieni, e qui saran quanti vederti
Hanno desio, pastor giovani e vegli, Ch’ardono d’ammirar i nuovi carmi,
E apprender l’armonie del verso antico.
Eglino a te selvatici capretti,
Eglino t’apporran terga rotonde
Quali al tuo Melibeo piacean, di linci.
Or vieni, e non temer, Titiro mio,
Delle nostre foreste, e gli alti pini Dalle cime commosse, e tengon fede
E gli arbusti, e le quercie, e fin le ghiande.
No, quivi insidie, e quivi ingiurie, quante Tu credi, non vi sono: a me che t’amo Non vuoi fidar te stesso? I regni miei Forse ti sembran vili? Eppure a sdegno Non ebber d’abitar quest’antri cavi
Gli Dei medesmi. Il dica l’Achillèo Chirone, e, anch’ei pastore, il dica Apollo.

Mopso, folleggi? Non sai tu, che Jola È cortese e gentil; ma non l’assente.
Ei sa che sono rustici i tuoi doni,
E de’ suoi tabernacoli per ora Il tuo speco non puoi dir più sicuro, Tal che sen possa ricrear. Ma quale
Smania ti prese nella mente accesa?
Qual nuova ne’ tuoi piè brama destossi?

Vede un garzon la vergine e l’ammira, Il fanciullo vagheggia l’augelletto,
L’augelletto le selve, e le foreste
Il tiepido spirar di primavera;
Così, Mopso, te sol Titiro ammira,
E dalla meraviglia amor germoglia.
Noi dispregiar; del Muson Frigio all’acque Tua sete spegnerò; nè tu il conosci,
Uso a bere, qual sei, nel fiume avito.
Ma che va intanto la giovenca mia
Mugghiando intorno? Che la gravin gonfie Forse le poppe fra l’umide coscie?
Lo credo almen; vommene in fretta or dunque Di fresco latte a ricolmar le conche, Ed ammollirvi poi le dure croste.
Vieni a mungere or via; così daremo Tanti li vasi a lui, quanti di latte
Ne promettea Titiro stesso; quando
Mandarne ad un pastor non sia superbo.

Mentr’io così diceva, ecco i compagni,
E discender con essi il sol dal monte.

Dante Allighieri a Giovanni del Virgilio, Egloga II *Alfesibeo, Melibeo, Titiro*

Gittato il vel di Colco il presto Eoo,
E gli altri alati corridori il vago
Titan traean per l'orbita, dal punto
In cui la vetta a dechinar comincia;
E del carro tenean le ruote il mezzo,
E gli obbietti, che fulgidi da pria
Eran vinti dall'ombre, or l'ombre stesse
Vincean, lasciando ribollire i campi.
Titiro quindi, e Alfesibeo del bosco
Ripararono al rezzo, e l'uno e l'altro
Mosso a pietà del gregge suo, di tigli
E di platani e frassini per entro
D'ombroso l'adducean denso boschetto.
E là, mentre commiste alle caprette,
Le pecorelle sull'erba silvestre
Corcate aspiran l'aer per le narici,
Titiro, veglio ch'era, riparato
Un acero sott'esso, al soporoso
Odor di quelle foglie ancor più grave,
Svelse dal tronco di gran pero un forte
Nodoso bastoncel, cui s'appoggiando
Stette, fin che dicesse Alfesibeo.

A.
Ed ei cantava: che le menti umane
S'ergano al ciel, d'onde ebber vita, i corpi Ad animar; che piaccia ai bianchi cigni, Lieti del suol palustre e del mit'aere, Il Caistro sonoro empir di canti;
Che s'accoppii del mare il pesce, e al mare Tolgasi, come in sul confln di Nereo Arriva a delibar l'onda del fiume; Che delle ircane tigri il sangue tinga Del Caucaso le rupi, e il libio serpe Con sue squamme di sabbie agiti i monti; Non ne stupisco io già: piace ad ognuno, Titiro, ciò che al genio suo risponde.
Ben di Mopso io stupisco (e meco tutti Quanti alberga pastori il suol Sicano) Che gli piaccian dell'Etna i nudi sassi.
Spelonche di Ciclopi. —

M.
Egli avea detto,
Ed ecco che anelante, e in sudor tutto, Arriva Melibeo, cui non appena:
Ve', Titiro sclamò, dieronsi i vegli Dell'ansia giovanile a far gran risa, Come i siculi un dì le fer, veggendo Dallo scoglio divelto il buon Sergesto.

T.
Titiro, il vecchio, allor dal verde cespo Levò il crine canuto, e a lui, che molto Ancor soffiava dall'aperte nari,
A dir imprese: Giovanetto ah troppo!
Qual mai nuova cagione in tanto corso Ad agitar i mantici del petto
Così rapidamente ti costrinse?

M.
Egli nulla all'incontro; ma ben quella Ch'ei seco avea siringa al labbro pose Tremulo ancor, nè all'aure sen venia Un filo pur del suono disïato.
Mentr'ei s'adopra il giovanetto a trarne Voce arundinea (strane cose io parlo, Ma però vere), la siringa stessa
Da sè medesma a risuonar imprese: *Sott'esso a caso i colli irrigui, dove Ninfa procace la Savena incontra Il verde Reno* — e, tre se al fiato i fori Rispondevano ancor, di versi cento
Fra gl'intenti pastori la dolcezza Titiro sparso avria, come con esso
Tra sè pensava anch'egli Alfesibeo:
A.
Che a Titiro così mandò gli accenti: E tu vorresti, venerando veglio,
Del Peloro lasciar gl'irrigui campi Per andartene all'antro dei Ciclopi?

T.
Cui egli: o mio carissimo, e n'hai dubbio?
A che mi tenti?

A.
E Alfesibeo: io dubbio?
Io tento? E non t'avvedi, che la tibia Del Nume per virtù si fa canora, Al mormorar simil di surte canne;
Dico a quel mormorar che feo solenni Le turpissime un dì tempie del rege Che, di Bromio al voler, le del Pattolo Arene tinse? — Ma te chiamin pure, O fortunato veglio, al lido infausto In cui tutte sue lave Etna riversa; Al mendace favor non prestar fede.

Delle Driadi del loco, e del tuo gregge, Qui dove sei, pietà ti prenda almeno.
Te i gioghi, e i nostri colli, e te lontano Piangerian questi fiumi, e queste Ninfe,
Meco tementi di peggior ventura;
E l'invidia cadria, ch'ora a noi porta Pachino istesso, e noi pastor pur anco
D'averti conosciuto avrem dispetto.
Ah veglio fortunato! ah non volere
Del tuo nome vivace i noti paschi,
E vedove lasciar le note fonti!

T.
O più che la metà di questo petto (E il suo toccò) parte a me cara, Mopso, Il
d'anni grave Titiro ripiglia,
A me di pari amor congiunto in elle Che timide fuggiro a Pireneo
Male caduto, Mopso che le rive Del Pò mi vede a destra, ed a sinistra Il
Rubicone, dove l'Adria chiude
Dell'Emilia il tener, egli mi esalta Dell'Etna i paschi, ed ei non sa, ch'entrambi
Fra l'erba molle del Trinacrio monte Posiam, di cui non avvi un più fecondo,
Che a nutrir valga di succhi vitali In fra i Siculi monti, armenti e gregge.
Eppur, sebbene i sassi Etnei posporre Debbansi del Peloro al verde suolo, Pur
il mio Mopso a visitare andrei, Qui lasciando la greggia, se la tema, Polifemo, di
te non mel vietasse.

A.
E Alfesibeo: Chi fia, che Polifemo
Non abborrisca? Ei che l'aperta bocca Tinger d'umano sangue à per costume,
Già sin d'allor, che Galatea lo vide Dilacerar le viscere del suo
Acide abbandonato, ed, oh infelice!, Fuggir appena ella poteo: che forse
D'amor la forza in lui potuto avrebbe, Mentre tutto bollia della spietata
Rabbia d'ira cotanta? Ah! come mai?

Se Acmenide medesmo inorridito
A veder solo l’operata strage Degli efferati socj del Ciclope,
Valse appena a tener l’anima in petto?
Ah no mia vita! io te ne priego, mai Tanta crudele voluttà ti punga
Che la Najade bella, e il piccol Reno Chiudano in seno questo capo illustre,
Cui dall’eccelsa vergine apparecchia Lo sfrondator di lauro eterne fronde.

T.
Titiro ne sorrise, e già tutt’uno
Nel medesmo pensier, del magno alunno, E dell’intero gregge, i detti accolse.

Ma poichè omai del Sole i corridori
L’etra fendean così verso la china,
Che l’ombra già vincea le cose tutte;
Tolte le verghe i due pastor, lasciando
La gelida convalle, e in un le selve,
Ritornarono dopo alle lor gregge,
E da di là le irsute pecorelle
Contente si moveano innanzi, come
N’andassero di nuovo ai paschi molli.
Nascosto intanto, e di quel sito appresso,
Stava l’accorto Jola; ei tutte cose,
Qual intenderle seppe, a me feo conte;
E s’egli a me, Mopso, io per te le pinsi.

ALTRI VERSI LATINI

I. Di Dante Alighieri

Vicini al mondo fluido, i regni estremi
Io canterò, che vasti apronsi inante
Agli spirti, e lor danno i giusti premi,
Che al merto di ciascun fissa il Tonante.

II. Di Dante Alighieri

Di Monarchia i diritti, ed i Celesti,
E cantai Flegetonte, e i laghi inferni,
Finchè i fati al cantar non ebbi infesti:
Ma poichè l’alma nei seggi superni,
All’autor suo drizzando i vanni presti,
Or degli astri si volse ai gaudii eterni;
DANTE son chiuso io qui, di patria fuore,
Cui Flora madre fu di poco amore.

III. Di Giovanni del Virgilio

Il teologo DANTE, il non ignaro
Di domma alcuno, ha nome celebrato
Per l’orbe sì, che ovunque è noto e chiaro:
DANTE ALLIGHIER nella cittade è nato
Che ritrasse dai fior nome preclaro;
Fu l’Italo sermon per lui parlato,
Lume e decoro delle Muse, or fera
Morte il colse, e del ciel salse alla sfera.

E, come nel codice Claricini, *s’aggiungano:*
Vent’un, tre cento e mille erano gli anni,
Di settembre negl’idi, allor ch’ei s’ebbe
Seggio mertato negli eterei scanni.

IV. Di Giovanni del Virgilio

Il Teologo DANTE, il non ignaro
Di domma alcuno, cui Filosofia
L’almo petto dischiuda, e le sia caro; Ei gloria delle Muse, e che ognor fia
Autor vulgare al popolo gradito,
Qui giace, e in ciel del nome empie ogni via.

Distribuì agli estinti il proprio sito
Egli, ed il regno delle doppie spade,
Di retore e di loico usando il rito.

Presso al morir suonar feo le contrade
Pierie al suon di pastorali avene;
Ma il coglie Atropo, ahi cruda!, e l’opra cade.

Fiorenza ingrata un frutto amaro bene
Dièggli a gustar, da quando al suo poeta
Dell’esilio patir fece le pene.

La pietosa Ravenna invece è lieta,
In sen del Duca suo Guido Novello,
D’avergli dato almen stanza quïeta.

Tredici volte cento, e unito a quello
D’anni vent’uno il novero volgea,
Quando Settembre, agl’idi, apria l’avello, Che agli astri suoi redir l’alma ne fea.

Essays

DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA

Questo è un trattato in lingua latina scritto da Dante tra il 1303 ed i primi mesi del 1305. Pur affrontando il tema della lingua volgare, è scritto in latino perché gli interlocutori a cui si rivolge appartengono all'élite culturale del tempo. È incompleto.

L'opera si apre con una metafora: Dante dichiara che userà il suo "ingegno e gli scritti e la cultura di altri" per riempire una coppa così grande e per mescerne un dolcissimo idromele.

Il tema centrale dell'opera è l'eloquenza della lingua volgare: nel trattare la materia in maniera esaustiva ed enciclopedica, Dante mette al centro la ricerca di un volgare illustre, ovvero quel volgare che possa assumere i caratteri di lingua letteraria all'interno del variegato panorama linguistico italiano.

INDICE

LIBER PRIMUS
LIBER SECUNDUS

LIBER PRIMUS

I

1. Cum neminem ante nos de vulgaris eloquentie doctrina quicquam inveniamus tractasse, atque talem scilicet eloquentiam penitus omnibus necessariam videamus, cum ad eam non tantum viri sed etiam mulieres et parvuli nitantur, in quantum natura permictit, volentes discretionem aliqualiter lucidare illorum qui tanquam ceci ambulant per plateas, plerunque anteriora posteriora putantes, Verbo aspirante de celis locutioni vulgarium gentium prodesse temptabimus, non solum aquam nostri ingenii ad tantum poculum aurientes, sed, accipiendo vel compilando ab aliis, potiora miscentes, ut exinde potionare possimus dulcissimum ydromellum.

2. Sed quia unamquanque doctrinam oportet non probare, sed suum aperire subiectum, ut sciatur quid sit super quod illa versatur, dicimus, celeriter actendentes, quod vulgarem locutionem appellamus eam qua infantes assuefiunt ab assistentibus cum primitus distinguere voces incipiunt; vel, quod brevius dici potest, vulgarem locutionem asserimus quam sine omni regola nutricem imitantes accipimus.

3. Est et inde alia locutio secondaria nobis, quam Romani gramaticam vocaverunt. Hanc quidem secundariam Greci habent et alii, sed non omnes: ad habitum vero huius pauci perveniunt, quia non nisi per spatium temporis et studii assiduitatem regulamur et doctrinamur in illa.

4. Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit humano generi usitata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur, licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa; tum quia naturalis est nobis, cum illa potius artificialis existat.

5. Et de hac nobiliori nostra est intentio pertractare.

II

1. Hec est nostra vera prima locutio. Non dico autem ‘nostra’ ut et aliam sit esse locutionem quam hominis: nam eorum que sunt omnium soli homini datum est loqui, cum solum sibi necessarium fuerit.

2. Non angelis, non inferioribus animalibus necessarium fuit loqui, sed nequicquam datum fuisset eis: quod nempe facere natura aborret.

3. Si etenim perspicaciter consideramus quid cum loquimur intendamus, patet quod nichil aliud quam nostre mentis enucleare aliis conceptum. Cum igitur angeli ad pandendas gloriosas eorum conceptiones habeant promptissimam atque ineffabilem sufficientiam intellectus, qua vel alter alteri totaliter innotescit per se, vel saltim per illud fulgentissimum Speculum in quo cuncti representantur pulcerrimi atque avidissimi speculantur, nullo signo locutionis indiguisse videntur.

4. Et si obiciatur de hiis qui corruerunt spiritibus, dupliciter responderi potest: primo quod, cum de hiis que necessaria sunt ad bene esse tractemus, eos preferire debemus, cum divinam curam perversi expectare noluerunt; secundo et melius quod ipsi demones ad manifestandam inter se perfidiam suam non indigent nisi ut sciat quilibet de quolibet quia est et quantus est; quod quidem sciunt: cognoverunt enim se invicem ante ruinam suam.

5. Inferioribus quoque animalibus, cum solo nature instinctu ducantur, de locutione non oportuit provideri: nam omnibus eiusdem speciei sunt iidem actus et passiones, et sic possunt per proprios alienos cognoscere; inter ea vero que diversarum sunt specierum non solum non necessaria fuit locutio, sed prorsus dampnosa fuisset, cum nullum amicabile commertium fuisset in illis.

6. Et si obiciatur de serpente loquente ad primam mulierem, vel de asina Balaam, quod locuti sint, ad hoc respondemus quod angelus in illa et dyabolus in illo taliter operati sunt quod ipsa animalia moverunt organa sua, sic ut vox inde resultavit distincta tanquam vera locutio; non quod aliud esset asine illud quam rudere, neque quam sibilare serpenti.

7. Si vero contra argumentetur quis de eo quod Ovidius dicit in quinto Metamorfoseos de picis loquentibus, dicimus quod hoc figurate dicit, aliud intelligens. Et si dicatur quod pice adhuc et alie aves locuntur, dicimus quod falsum est, quia talis actus locutio non est, sed quedam imitatio soni nostre vocis; vel quod nituntur imitari nos in quantum sonamus, sed non in quantum loquimur. Unde si expresse dicenti ‘pica’ resonaret etiam ‘pica’, non esset hec nisi representatio vel imitatio soni illius qui prius dixisset.

8. Et sic patet soli homini datum fuisse loqui. Sed quare necessarium sibi foret, breviter pertractare conemur.

III

1. Cum igitur homo non nature instinctu, sed ratione moveatur, et ipsa ratio vel circa discretionem vel circa iudicium vel circa electionem diversificetur in

singulis, adeo ut fere quilibet sua propria specie videatur gaudere, per proprios actus vel passiones, ut brutum anirnal, neminem alium intelligere opinamur. Nec per spiritualem speculationem, ut angelum, alterum alterum introire contingit, cum grossitie atque opacitate mortalis corporis humanus spiritus sit obtectus.

2 Oportuit ergo genus humanum ad comunicandas inter se conceptiones suas aliquod rationale signum et sensuale habere: quia, cum de ratione accipere habeat et in rationem portare, rationale esse oportuit; cumque de una ratione in aliam nichil deferri possit nisi per medium sensuale, sensuale esse oportuit. Quare, si tantum rationale esset, pertransire non posset; si tantum sensuale, nec a ratione accipere nec in rationem deponere potuisset.

3. Hoc equidem signum est ipsum subiectum nobile de quo loquimur: nam sensuale quid est in quantum sonus est; rationale vero in quantum aliquid significare videtur ad placitum.

IV

1. Soli homini datum fuit ut loqueretur, ut ex premissis manifestum est. Nunc quoque investigandum esse existimo cui hominum primum locutio data sit, et quid primitus locutus fuerit, et ad quem, et ubi, et quando, nec non et sub quo ydiomate primiloquium emanavit.

2. Secundum quidem quod in principio Genesis loquitur, ubi de primordio mundi Sacratissima Scriptura pertractat, mulierem invenitur ante omnes fuisse locutam, scilicet presumptuosissimam Evam, cum dyabolo sciscitanti respondit: ‘De fructu lignorum que sunt in paradiso vescimur; de fructu vero ligni quod est in medio paradisi precepit nobis Deus ne comederemus nec tangeremus, ne forte moriamur’.

3. Sed quanquam mulier in scriptis prius inveniatur locuta, rationabilius tamen est ut hominem prius locutum fuisse credamus, et inconvenienter putatur tam egregium humani generis actum non prius a viro quam a femina profluxisse. Rationabiliter ergo credimus ipsi Ade prius datum fuisse loqui ab Eo qui statim ipsum plasmaverat.

4. Quid autem prius vox primi loquentis sonaverit, viro sane mentis in promptu esse non titubo ipsum fuisse quod ‘Deus’ est, scilicet El, vel per modum interrogationis vel per modum responsionis. Absurdum atque rationi videtur orrificum ante Deum ab homine quicquam nominatum fuisse, cum ab ipso et in ipsum factus fuisset homo. Nam sicut post prevaricationem humani generis quilibet exordium sue locutionis incipit ab ‘heu’, rationabile est quod

ante qui fuit inciperet a gaudio; et cum nullum gaudium sit extra Deum, sed totum in Deo, et ipse Deus totus sit gaudium, consequens est quod primus loquens primo et ante omnia dixisset ‘Deus’.

5. Oritur et hinc ista questio, cum dicimus superius per viam responsionis hominem primum fuisse locutum, si responsio fuit ad Deum: nam, si ad Deum fuit, iam videretur quod Deus locutus extitisset, quod contra superius prelibata videtur insurgere.

6. Ad quod quidem dicimus quod bene potuit respondisse Deo interrogante, nec propter hoc Deus locutus est ipsa quam dicimus locutionem. Quis enim dubitat quicquid est ad Dei nutum esse flexibile, quo quidem facta, quo conservata, quo etiam gubernata sunt omnia? Igitur cum ad tantas alterationes moveatur aer imperio nature inferioris, que ministra et factura Dei est, ut tonitrua personet, ignem fulgoret, aquam gemat, spargat nivem, grandinea lancinet, nonne imperio Dei movebitur ad quedam sonare verba, ipso distinguente qui maiora distinxit? Quid ni?

7. Quare ad hoc et ad quedam alia hec sufficere credimus.

V

1. Opinantes autem non sine ratione, tam ex superioribus quam inferioribus sumpta, ad ipsum Deum primitus primum hominem direxisse locutionem, rationabiliter dicimus ipsum loquentem primum, mox postquam afflatus est ab animante Virtute, incunctanter fuisse locutum. Nam in homine sentiri humanius credimus quam sentire, dumunodo sentiatur et sentiat tanquam homo. Si ergo faber ille atque perfectionis principium et amator afflando primum nostrum omni perfectione complevit, rationabile nobis apparet nobilissimum animal non ante sentire quam sentiri cepisse.

2. Si quis vero fatetur contra obiciens quod non oportebat illum loqui, cum solus adhuc homo existeret, et Deus omnia sine verbis archana nostra discernat etiam ante quam nos, - cum illa reverentia dicimus qua uti oportet cum de eterna Voluntate aliquid iudicamus, quod licet Deus sciret, immo presciret (quod idem est quantum ad Deum) absque locutione conceptum primi loquentis, voluit tamen et ipsum loqui, ut in explicatione tante dotis gloriaretur ipse qui gratis dotaverat. Et ideo divinitus in nobis esse credendum est quod in actu nostrorum effectuum ordinato letamur.

3. Et hinc penitus elicere possumus locum illum ubi effutita est prima locutio: quoniam, si extra paradisum afflatus est homo, extra, si vero intra, intra fuisse

locum prime locutionis convicimus.

VI

1. Quoniam permultis ac diversis ydiomatibus negotium exercitatur humanum, ita quod multi multis non aliter intelligantur verbis quam sine verbis, de ydiomate illo venari nos decet quo vir sine matre, vir sine lacte, qui nec pupillarem etatem nec vidit adultam, creditur usus.

2. In hoc, sicut etiam in multis aliis, Petramala civitas amplissima est, et patria maiori parti filiorum Adam. Nam quicunque tam obscene rationis est ut locum sue nationis delitiosissimum credat esse sub sole, hic etiam pre cunctis proprium vulgare licetur, idest maternam locutionem, et per consequens credit ipsum fuisse illud quod fuit Ade.

3. Nos autem, cui mundus est patria velut piscibus equor, quanquam Sarnum biberimus ante dentes et Florentiam adeo diligamus ut, quia dileximus, exilium patiamur iniuste, rationi magis quam sensui spatulas nostri iudicii podiamus. Et quamvis ad voluptatem nostram sive nostre sensualitatis quietem in terris amenior locus quam Florentia non existat, revolventes et poetarum et aliorum scriptorum volumina quibus mundus universaliter et membratim describitur, ratiocinantesque in nobis situationes varias mundi locorum et eorum habitudinem ad utrunque polum et circulum equatorem, multas esse perpendimus firmiterque censemus et magis nobiles et magis delitiosas et regiones et urbes quam Tusciam et Florentiam, unde sumus oriundus et civis, et plerasque nationes et gentes delectabiliori atque utiliori sermone uti quam Latinos.

4. Redeuntes igitur ad propositum, dicimus certam formam locutionis a Deo cum anima prima concreatam fuisse. Dico autem ‘formam’ et quantum ad rerum vocabula et quantum ad vocabulorum constructionem et quantum ad constructionis prolationem: qua quidem forma omnis lingua loquentium uteretur, nisi culpa presumptionis humane dissipata fuisset, ut inferius ostendetur.

5. Hac forma locutionis locutus est Adam; hac forma locutionis locuti sunt omnes posteri eius usque ad edificationem turris Babel, que ‘turris confusionis’ interpretatur; hanc formam locutionis hereditati sunt filii Heber, qui ab eo dicti sunt Hebrei.

6. Hiis solis post confusionem remansit, ut Redemptor noster, qui ex illis oriturus erat secundum humanitatem, non lingua confusionis, sed gratie frueretur.

7 Fuit ergo hebraicum ydioma illud quod primi loquentis labia fabricarunt.

VII

1. Dispudet, heu, nunc humani generis ignominiam renovare! Sed quia preferire non possumus quin transeamus per illam, quanquam rubor ad ora consurgat animusque refugiat, percurremus.

2. O semper natura nostra prona peccatis! O ab initio et nunquam desinens nequitatrix! Num fuerat satis ad tui correptionem quod, per primam prevaricationem eluminata, delitiarum exulabas a patria? Num satis quod, per universalem familie tue luxuriem et trucitatem, unica riservata domo, quicquid tui iuris erat cataclismo perierat, et [que] commiseras tu animalia celi terreque iam luerant? Quippe satis extiterat. Sed, sicut proverbialiter dici solet ‘Non ante tertium equitabis’, misera miserum venire maluisti ad equum.

3. Ecce, lector, quod vel oblitus homo vel vilipendens disciplinas priores, et avertens oculos a vibicibus que remanserant, tertio insurrexit ad verbera, per superbam stultitiam presumendo.

4. Presumpsit ergo in corde suo incurabilis homo, sub persuasione gigantis Nembroth, arte sua non solum superare naturam, sed etiam ipsum naturantem, qui Deus est, et cepit edificare turrim in Sennaar, que postea dicta est Babel, hoc est ‘confusio’, per quam celum sperabat ascendere, intendens inscius non equare, sed suum superare Factorem.

5. O sine mensura clementia celestis imperii! Quis patrum tot sustineret insultus a filio? Sed exurgens non hostili scutica sed paterna et alias verberibus assueta, rebellantem filium pia correctione nec non memorabili castigavit.

6. Siquidem pene totum humanum genus ad opus iniquitatis coierat: pars imperabant, pars architectabantur, pars muros moliebantur, pars amussibus regulabant, pars trullis linebant, pars scindere rupes, pars mari, pars terra vehere intendebant, partesque diverse diversis aliis operibus indulgebant; cum celitus tanta confusione percussi sunt ut, qui omnes una eademque loquela deserviebant ad opus, ab opere multis diversificati loquelis desinerent et nunquam ad idem commertium convenirent.

7. Solis etenim in uno convenientibus actu eadem loquela remansit: puta cunctis architectoribus una, cunctis saxa volventibus una, cunctis ea parantibus una; et sic de singulis operantibus accidit. Quot quot autem exercitii varietates tendebant ad opus, tot tot ydiomatibus tunc genus humanum disiungitur; et quanto excellentius exercebant, tanto rudius nunc barbariusque locuntur.

8. Quibus autem sacratum ydioma remansit nec aderant nec exercitium commendabant, sed graviter detestantes stoliditatem operantium deridebant. Sed hec minima pars, quantum ad numerum, fuit de semine Sem, sicut conicio, qui fuit tertius filius Noe: de qua quidem ortus est populus Israel, qui antiquissima locutione sunt usi usque ad suam dispersionem.

VIII

1. Ex precedenter memorata confusione linguarum non leviter opinamur per universa mundi climata climatumque plagas incolendas et angulos tunc primum homines fuisse dispersos. Et cum radix humane propaginis principalis in oris orientalibus sit plantata, nec non ab inde ad utrunque latus per diffusos multipliciter palmites nostra sit extensa propago, demumque ad fines occidentales protracta, forte primitus tunc vel totius Europe flumina, vel saltim quedam, rationalia guctura potaverunt.

2. Sed sive advene tunc primitus advenissent, sive ad Europam indigene repedassent, ydioma secum tripharium homines actulerunt; et afferentium hoc alii meridionalem, alii septentrionalem regionem in Europa sibi sortiti sunt; et tertii, quos nunc Grecos vocamus, partim Europe, partim Asye occuparunt.

3. Ab uno postea eodemque ydiomate in vindice confusione recepto diversa vulgaria traxerunt originem, sicut inferius ostendemus.

4. Nam totum quod ab hostiis Danubii sive Meotidis paludibus usque ad fines occidentales Anglie Ytalorum Francorumque finibus et Oceano limitatur, solum unum obtinuit ydioma, licet postea per Sclavones, Ungaros, Teutonicos, Saxones, Anglicos et alias nationes quamplures fuerit per diversa vulgaria dirivatum, hoc solo fere omnibus in signum eiusdem principio remanente, quod quasi predicti omnes jo affermando respondent.

5. Ab isto incipiens ydiomate, videlicet a finibus Ungarorum versus orientem, aliud occupavit totum quod ab inde vocatur Europa, nec non ulterius est protractum.

6. Totum vero quod in Europa restat ab istis, tertium tenuit ydioma, licet nunc tripharium videatur: nam alii oc, alii oil, alii sì affirmando locuntur, ut puta Yspani, Franci et Latini. Signum autem quod ab uno eodemque ydiomate istarum trium gentium progrediantur vulgaria, in promptu est, quia multa per eadem vocabula nominare videntur, ut Deum, celum, amorem, mare, terram, est, vivit, moritur, amat, alia fere omnia.

7. Istorum vero proferentes oc meridionalis Europe tenent partem occidentalem, a Ianuensium finibus incipientes. Qui autem sì dicunt a predictis finibus orientalem tenent, videlicet usque ad promuntorium illud Ytalie qua sinus Adriatici maris incipit, et Siciliam. Sed loquentes oil quodam modo septentrionales sunt respectu istorum: nam ab oriente Alamannos habent et ab occidente et settentrione anglico mari vallati sunt et montibus Aragonie terminati; a meridie quoque Provincialibus et Apenini devexione clauduntur.

IX

1. Nos autem oportet quam nunc habemus rationem periclitari, cum inquirere intendamus de hiis in quibus nullius autoritate fulcimur, hoc est de unius eiusdemque a principio ydiomatis variatione secuta. Et quia per notiora itinera salubrius breviusque transitur, per illud tantum quod nobis est ydioma pergamus, alia desinentes: nam quod in uno est rational[i], videtur in aliis esse causa.

2. Est igitur super quod gradimur ydioma tractando tripharium, ut superius dictum est: nam alii oc, alii sì, alii vero dicunt oil. Et quod unum fuerit a principio confusionis (quod prius probandum est) apparet, quia convenimus in vocabulis multis, velut eloquentes doctores ostendunt: que quidem convenientia ipsi confusioni repugnat, que ruit celitus in edificatione Babel.

3. Trilingues ergo doctores in multis conveniunt, et maxime in hoc vocabulo quod est ‘amor’. Gerardus de Brunel:

Si-m sentis fezelz amics, per ver encusera amor.

Rex Navarre:

De fin amor si vient sen et bonté;

Dominus Guido Guinizelli:

Né fe’ amor prima che gentil core, né gentil [cor] prima che amor, natura.

4. Quare autem tripharie principali[ter] variatum sit, investigemus; et quare quelibet istarum variationum in se ipsa variatur, puta dextre Ytalie locutio ab ea que est sinistre (nam aliter Paduani et aliter Pisani locuntur); et quare vicinius habitantes adhuc discrepant in loquendo, ut Mediolanenses et Veronenses, Romani et Florentini, nec non convenientes in eodem genere gentis, ut Neapoletani et Caetani, Ravennates et Faventini, et, quod mirabilius est, sub eadem civilitate morantes, ut Bononienses Burgi Sancti Felicis et Bononienses Strate Maioris.

5 Hee omnes differentie atque sermonum varietates quid accidant, una eademque ratione patebit.

6. Dicimus ergo quod nullus effectus superat suam causam, in quantum effectus est, quia nil potest efficere quod non est. Cum igitur omnis nostra loquela - preter illam homini primo concreatam a Deo - sit a nostro beneplacito reparata post confusionem illam que nil aliud fuit quam prioris oblivio, et homo sit instabilissimum atque variabilissimum animal, nec durabilis nec continua esse potest, sed sicut alia que nostra sunt, puta mores et habitus, per locorum temporumque distantias variari oportet.

7. Nec dubitandum reor modo in eo quod diximus ‘temporum’, sed potius opinamur tenendum: nam si alia nostra opera perscrutemur, multo magis discrepare videmur a vetustissimis concivibus nostris quam a coetaneis perlonginquis. Quapropter audacter testamur quod si vetustissimi Papienses nunc resurgerent, sermone vario vel diverso cum modernis Papiensibus loquerentur.

8. Nec aliter mirum videatur quod dicimus quam percipere iuvenem exoletum quem exolescere non videmus: nam que paulatim moventur, minime perpenduntur a nobis, et quanto longiora tempora variatio rei ad perpendi requirit, tanto rem illam stabiliorem putamus.

9. Non etenim ammiramur, si extimationes hominum qui parum distant a brutis putant eandem civitatem sub invariabili semper civicasse sermone, cum sermonis variatio civitatis eiusdem non sine longissima temporum successione paulatim contingat, et hominum vita sit etiam, ipsa sua natura, brevissima.

10. Si ergo per eandem gentem sermo variatur, ut. dictum est, successive per tempora, nec stare ullo modo potest, necesse est ut disiunctim abmotimque morantibus varie varietur, ceu varie variantur mores et habitus, qui nec natura nec consortio confirmantur, sed humanis beneplacitis localique congruitate nascuntur.

11 Hinc moti sunt inventores gramatice facultatis: que quidem gramatica nichil aliud est quam quedam inalterabilis locutionis ydemptitas diversibus temporibus atque locis. Hec cum de comuni consensu multarum gentium fuerit regulata, nulli singolari arbitrio videtur obnoxia, et per consequens nec variabilis esse potest. Adinvenerunt ergo illam ne, propter variationem sermonis arbitrio singulariurn fluitantis, vel nullo modo vel saltim imperfecte antiquorum actingeremus autoritates et gesta, sive illorum quos a nobis locorum diversitas facit esse diversos.

X

1. Triphario nunc existente nostro ydiomate, ut superius dictum est, in comparatione sui ipsius, secundum quod trisonum factum est, cum tanta timiditate cunctamur librantes quod hanc vel istam vel illam partem in comparando preponere non audemus, nisi eo quo gramatice positores inveniuntur accepisse ‘sic’ adverbium affirmandi: quod quandam anterioritatem erogare videtur Ytalis, qui sì dicunt.

2. Quelibet enim partium largo testimonio se tuetur. Allegat ergo pro se lingua oil quod propter sui faciliorem se delectabiliorem vulgaritatem quicquid redactum est sive inventum ad vulgare prosaycum, suum est: videlicet Biblia cum Troianorum Romanorumque gestibus compilata et Arturi regis ambages pulcerrime et quamplures alie ystorie ac doctrine.

3. Pro se vero argumentatur alia, scilicet oc, quod vulgares eloquentes in ea primitus poetati sunt tanquam in perfectiori dulciorique loquela, ut puta Petrus de Alvernia et alii antiquiores doctores.

4. Tertia quoque, [que] Latinorum est, se duobus privilegiis actestatur preesse: primo quidem quod qui dulcius subtiliusque poetati vulgariter sunt, hii familiares et domestici sui sunt, puta Cynus Pistoriensis et amicus eius; secundo quia magis videntur inniti gramatice que comunis est, quod rationabiliter inspicientibus videtur gravissimum argumentum.

5. Nos vero iudicium relinquentes in hoc et tractatum nostrum ad vulgare latium retrabentes, et receptas in se variationes dicere nec non illas invicem comparare conemur.

6. Dicimus ergo primo Latium bipartitum esse in dextrum et sinistrum. Si quis autem querat de linea dividente, breviter respondemus esse iugum Apenini, quod, ceu fistule culmen hinc inde ad diversa stillicidia grundat aquas, ad alterna hinc inde litora per ymbricia longa distillat, ut Lucanus in secundo describit: dextrum quoque latus Tyrenum mare grundatorium habet, levum vero in Adriaticum cadit.

7. Et dextri regiones sunt Apulia, sed non tota, Roma, Ducatus, Tuscia et Ianuensis Marchia; sinistri autem pars Apulie, Marchia Anconitana, Romandiola, Lombardia, Marchia Trivisiana cum Venetiis. Forum Iulii vero et Ystria non nisi leve Ytalie esse possunt; nec insule Tyreni maris, videlicet Sicilia et Sardinia, non nisi dextre Ytalie sunt, vel ad dextram Ytaliam sociande.

8. In utroque quidem duorum laterum, et hiis que secuntur ad ea, lingue hominum variantur: ut lingua Siculorum cum Apulis, Apulorum cum Romanis, Romanorum cum Spoletanis, horum cum Tuscis, Tuscorum cum Ianuensibus, Ianuensium cum Sardis; nec non Calabrorum cum Anconitanis, horum cum Romandiolis, Romandiolorum cum Lombardis, Lombardorum curn Trivisianis

et Venetis, horum cum Aquilegiensibus, et istorum cum Ystrianis. De quo Latinorum neminem nobiscum dissentire putamus.

9. Quare ad minus xiiii vulgaribus sola videtur Ytalia variari. Que adhuc omnia vulgaria in sese variantur, ut puta in Tuscia Senenses et Aretini, in Lombardia Ferrarenses et Placentini; nec non in eadem civitate aliqualem variationem perpendimus, ut superius in capitulo immediato posuimus. Quapropter, si primas et secundarias et subsecundarias vulgaris Ytalie variationes calcolare velimus, et in hoc minimo mundi angulo non solum ad millenam loquele variationem venire contigerit, sed etiam ad magis ultra.

XI

1. Quam multis varietatibus latio dissonante vulgari, decentiorem atque illustrem Ytalie venemur loquelam; et ut nostre venationi pervium callem habere possimus, perplexos frutices atque sentes prius eiciamus de silva.

2. Sicut ergo Romani se cunctis preponendos existimant, in hac eradicatione sive discerptione non inmerito eos aliis preponamus, protestantes eosdem in nulla vulgaris eloquentie ratione fore tangendos. Dicimus igitur Romanorum non vulgare, sed potius tristiloquium, ytalorum vulgarium omnium esse turpissimum; nec mirum, cum etiam morum habituumque deformitate pre cunctis videantur fetere. Dicunt enim: Messure, quinto dici?

3. Post hos incolas Anconitane Marchie decerpamus, qui Chignamente scate, sciate locuntur: cum quibus et Spoletanos abicimus.

4. Nec pretereundum est quod in improperium istarum trium gentium cantiones quamplures invente sunt: inter quas unam vidimus recte atque perfecte ligatam, quam quidam Florentinus nomine Castra posuerat; incipiebat etenim

Una fermana scopai da Cascioli, cita cita se ‘n gìa ‘n grande aina.

5. Post quos Mediolanenses atque Pergameos eorumque finitimos eruncemus, in quorum etiam improperium quendam cecinisse recolimus

Enter l’ora del vesper, ciò fu del mes d’occhiover.

6. Post hos Aquilegienses et Ystrianos cribremus, qui Ces fas tu? crudeliter accentuando eructuant. Cumque hiis montaninas omnes et rusticanas loquelas eicimus, que semper mediastinis civibus accentus enormitate dissonare videntur, ut Casentinenses et Fractenses.

7. Sardos etiam, qui non Latii sunt sed Latiis associandi videntur, eiciamus, quoniam soli sine proprio vulgari esse videntur, gramaticam tanquam simie homines imitantes: nam domus nova et dominus meus locuntur.

XII

1. Exaceratis quodam modo vulgaribus ytalis, inter ea que remanserunt in cribro comparationem facientes honorabilius atque honorificentius breviter seligamus.

2 Et primo de siciliano examinemus ingenium: nam videtur sicilianum vulgare sibi famam pre aliis asciscere eo quod quicquid poetantur Ytali sicilianum vocatur, et eo quod perplures doctores indigenas invenimus graviter cecinisse, puta in cantionibus illis

Ancor che l'aigua per lo foco lassi, et Amor, che lungiamente m'hai menato.

3. Sed hec fama trinacrie terre, si rccte signum ad quod tendit inspiciamus, videtur tantum in obproprium ytalorum principum remansisse, qui non heroico more sed plebeio secuntur superbiam.

4. Siquidem illustres heroes, Fredericus cesar et benegenitus eius Manfredus, nobilitatem ac rectitudinem sue forme pandentes, donec fortuna permisit humana secuti sunt, brutalia dedignantes. Propter quod corde nobiles atque gratiarum dotati inherere tantorum principum maiestati conati sunt, ita ut eorum tempore quicquid excellentes animi Latinorum enitebantur primitus in tantorum coronatorum aula prodibat; et quia regale solium erat Sicilia, factum est ut quicquid nostri predecessores vulgariter protulerunt, sicilianum voc[ar]etur: quod quidem retinemus et nos, nec posteri nostri permutare valebunt.

5. Racha, racha. Quid nunc personat tuba novissimi Frederici, quid tintinabulum secundi Karoli, quid cornua lohannis et Azonis marchionum potentum, quid aliorum magnatum tibie, nisi 'Venite carnifices, venite altriplices, venite avaritie sectatores'?

6. Sed prestat ad propositum repedare quam frustra loqui. Et dicimus quod, si vulgare sicilianum accipere volumus secundum quod prodit a terrigenis mediocribus, ex ore quorum iudicium eliciendum videtur, prelationis honore minime dignum est, quia non sine quodam tempore profertur; ut puta ibi:

Tragemi d'este focora se t'este a boluntate.

Si autem ipsum accipere volumus secundum quod ab ore primorum Siculorum emanat, ut in preallegatis cantionibus perpendi potest, nichil differt ab illo quod laudabilissimum est, sicut inferius ostendemus.

7. Apuli quoque vel sui acerbitate vel finitimorum suorum contiguitate, qui Romani et Marchiani sunt, turpiter barbarizant: dicunt enim

Volzera che chiangesse lo quatraro.

8. Sed quamvis terrigene Apuli loquantur obscene comuniter, prefulgentes eorum quidam polite locuti sunt, vocabula curialiora in suis cantionibus compilantes, ut manifeste apparet eorum dicta perspicientibus, ut puta

Madonna, dir vi volglio, et Per fino amore vo si letamente.

9 Quapropter superiora notantibus innotescere debet nec siculum nec apulum esse illud quod in Ytalia pulcerrimum est vulgare, cum eloquentes indigenas ostenderimus a proprio divertisse.

XIII

1. Post hec veniamus ad Tuscos, qui propter amentiam suam infroniti titulum sibi vulgaris illustris arrogare videntur. Et in hoc non solum plebeia dementat intentio, sed famosos quamplures viros hoc tenuisse comperimus: puta Guittonem Aretinum, qui nunquam se ad curiale vulgare direxit, Bonagiuntam Lucensem, Gallum Pisanum, Minum Mocatum Senensem, Brunectum Florentinum, quorum dicta, si rimari vacaverit, non curialia sed municipalia tantum invenientur. Et quoniam Tusci pre aliis in hac ebrietate baccantur, dignum utileque videtur municipalia vulgaria Tuscanorum sigillatim in aliquo depompare.

2. Locuntur Florentini et dicunt

Manichiamo introcque, altro. ï che noi non facciamo

Pisani:

Bene andonno li fanti ï de Fiorensa per Pisa.

Lucenses:

Fo voto a Dio ke in grassarra eie lo comuno de Lucca.

Senenses:

Onche renegata avess’io Siena. Ch’ee chesto?

Aretini:

Vuo’ tu venire ovelle?

De Perusio, Urbe Veteri, Viterbio, nec non de Civitate Castellana, propter affinitatem quam habent cum Romanis et Spoletanis, nichil tractare intendimus.

3. Sed quanquam fere omnes Tusci in suo turpiloquio sint obtusi, nonnullos vulgaris excellentiam cognovisse sentimus, scilicet Guidonem, Lapum et unum alium, Florentinos, et Cynum Pistoriensem, quem nune indigne postponimus, non indigne coacti.

4. Itaque si tuscanas examinemus loquelas, et pensemus qualiter viri prehonorati a propria diverterunt, non restat in dubio quin aliud sit vulgare quod querimus quam quod actingit populus Tuscanorum.

5. Si quis autem quod de Tuscis asserimus, de Ianuensibus asserendum non putet, hoc solum in mente premat, quod si per oblivionem Ianuenses ammicterent z licteram, vel mutire totaliter eos vel novam reparare oporteret loquelam. Est enim z maxima pars eorum locutionis; que quidem lictera non sine multa rigiditate profertur.

XIV

1. Transeuntes nunc humeros Apenini frondiferos levam Ytaliam contatim venemur ceu solemus, orientaliter ineuntes.

2. Romandiolam igitur ingredientes, dicimus nos duo in Latio invenisse vulgaria quibusdam convenientiis contrariis alternata. Quorum unum in tantum muliebre videtur propter vocabulorum et prolationis mollitiem quod virum, etiam si viriliter sonet, feminam tamen facit esse credendum.

3. Hoc Romandiolos omnes habet, et presertim Forlivienses, quorum civitas, licet novissima sit, meditullium tamen esse videtur totius provincie: hii deuscì affirmando locuntur, et oclo meo et corada mea proferunt blandientes. Horum aliquos a proprio poetando divertisse audivimus, Thomam videlicet et Ugolinum Bucciolam Faventinos.

4. Est et aliud, sicut dictum est, adeo vocabulis accentibusque yrsutum et yspidum quod propter sui rudem asperitatem mulierem loquentem non solum disterminat, sed esse virum dubitare[s le]ctor.

5. Hoc omnes qui magara dicunt, Brixianos videlicet, Veronenses et Vigentinos, habet; nec non Paduanos, turpiter sincopantes omnia in -tus participia et denominativa in -tas, ut mercò et bontè. Cum quibus et Trivisianos adducimus, qui more Brixianorum et finitimorum suorum u consonantem per f apocopando proferunt, puta nof pro ‘novem’ et vif pro ‘vivo’: quod quidem barbarissimum reprobamus.

6. Veneti quoque nec sese investigati vulgaris honore dignantur: et si quis eorum, errore confossus, vanitaret in hoc, recordetur si unquam dixit:

Per le plaghe de Dio tu no verras.

7. Inter quos omnes unum audivimus nitentem divertire a materno et ad curiale vulgare intendere, videlicet Ildebrandinum Paduanum.

8. Quare, omnibus presentis capituli ad iudicium comparentibus, arbitramur nec romandiolum, nec suum oppositum ut dictum est, nec venetianum esse illud quod querimus vulgare illustre.

XV

1. Illud autem quod de ytala silva residet percontari conemur expedientes.

2. Dicimus ergo quod forte non male opinantur qui Bononienses asserunt pulcriori locutione loquentes, cum ab Ymolensibus, Ferrarensibus et Mutinensibus circunstantibus aliquid proprio vulgari asciscunt, sicut facere quoslibet a finitimis suis conicimus, ut Sordellus de Mantua sua ostendit, Cremone, Brixie atque Verone confini: qui, tantus eloquentie vir existens, non solum in poetando sed quomodocunque loquendo patrium vulgare descruit.

3. Accipiunt enim prefati cives ab Ymolensibus lenitatem atque mollitiem, a Ferrarensibus vero et Mutinensibus aliqualem garrulitatem que proprie Lombardorum est: hanc ex commixtione advenarum Longobardorum terrigenis credimus remansisse.

4. Et hec est causa quare Ferrarensium, Mutinensium vel Regianorum nullum invenimus poetasse: nam proprie garrulitati assuefacti nullo modo possunt ad vulgare aulicum sine quadam acerbitate venire. Quod multo magis de Parmensibus est putandum, qui monto pro ‘multo’ dicunt.

5. Si ergo Bononienses utrinque accipiunt, ut dictum est, rationabile videtur esse quod eorum locutio per conmixtionem oppositorum ut dictum est ad laudabilem suavitatem remaneat temperata: quod procul dubio nostro iudicio sic esse censemus.

6. Itaque si preponentes eos in vulgari sermone sola municipalia Latinorum vulgaria comparando considerant, allubescentes concordamus cum illis; si vero simpliciter vulgare bononiense preferendum existimant, dissentientes discordamus ab eis. Non etenim est quod aulicum et illustre vocamus: quoniam, si fuisset, maximus Guido Guinizelli, Guido Ghisilerius, Fabrutius et Honestus et alii poetantes Bononie nunquam a proprio divertissent: qui doctores fuerunt illustres et vulgarium discretione repleti. Maximus Guido:

Madonna, lo fino amore ch’a vui porto;

Guido Ghisilerius:

Donna, lo fermo core;

Fabrutius:

Lo meo lontano gire;

Honestus:

Più non actendo il tuo soccorso, Amore.

Que quidem verba prorsus a mediastinis Bononie sunt diversa.

7. Cumque de residuis in extremis Ytalie civitatibus neminem dubitare pendamus (et si quis dubitat, illum nulla nostra solutione dignamur), parum restat in nostra discussione dicendum. Quare, cribellum cupientes deponere, ut residentiam cito visamus, dicimus Tridentum atque Taurinum nec non Alexandriam civitates metis Ytalie in tantum sedere propinquas quod puras nequeunt habere loquelas; ita quod si etiam quod turpissimum habent vulgare, haberent pulcerrimum, propter aliorum commixtionem esse vere latium negaremus. Quare, si latium illustre venamur, quod venamur in illis inveniri non potest.

XVI

1. Postquam venati saltus et pascua sumus Ytalie, nec pantheram quam sequimur adinvenimus, ut ipsam reperire possimus rationabilius investigemus de illa ut, solerti studio, redolentem ubique et necubi apparentem nostris penitus irretiamus tenticulis.

2. Resumentes igitur venabula nostra, dicimus quod in omni genere rerum unum esse oportet quo generis illius omnia comparentur et ponderentur, et a quo omnium aliorum mensuram accipiamus: sicut in numero cuncta mensurantur uno, et plura vel pauciora dicuntur secundum quod distant ab uno vel ei propinquant, et sicut in coloribus omnes albo mensurantur; nam visibiles magis et minus dicuntur secundum quod accedunt vel recedunt ab albo. Et quemadmodum de hiis dicimus que quantitatem et qualitatem ostendunt, de predicamentorum quolibet, etiam de substantia, posse dici putamus: scilicet ut unumquodque mensurabile sit, secundum quod in genere est, illo quod simplicissimum est in ipso genere.

3. Quapropter in actionibus nostris, quantumcunque dividantur in species, hoc signum inveniri oportet quo et ipse mensurentur. Nam, in quantum simpliciter ut homines agimus, virtutem habemus (ut generaliter illam intelligamus); nam secundum ipsam bonum et malum hominem iudicamus; in quantum ut homines cives agimus, habemus legem, secundum quam dicitur civis bonus et malus; in quantum ut homines latini agimus, quedam habemus simplicissima signa et morum et habituum et locutionis, quibus latine actiones ponderantur et mensurantur.

4. Que quidem nobilissima sunt earum que Latinorum sunt actiones, hec nullius civitatis Ytalie propria sunt, et in omnibus comunia sunt: inter que nunc potest illud discerni vulgare quod superius venabamur, quod in qualibet redolet civitate nec cubat in ulla.

5. Potest tamen magis in una quam in alia redolere, sicut simplicissima substantiarum, que Deus est, in homine magis redolet quam in bruto, in animali quam in planta, in hac quam in minera, in hac quam in elemento, in igne quam in terra; et simplicissima quantitas, quod est unum, in impari numero redolet magis quam in pari; et simplicissimus color, qui albus est, magis in citrino quam in viride redolet.

6. Itaque, adepti quod querebamus, dicimus illustre, cardinale, aulicum et curiale vulgare in Latio quod omnis latie civitatis est et nullius esse videtur, et quo municipalia vulgaria omnia Latinorum mensurantur et ponderantur et comparantur.

XVII

1. Quare autem hoc quod repertum est, illustre, cardinale, aulicum et curiale adicientes vocemus, nunc disponendum est: per quod clarius ipsum quod ipsum est faciamus patere.

2. Primum igitur quid intendimus cum illustre adicimus, et quare illustre dicimus, denudemus. Per hoc quoque quod illustre dicimus, intelligimus quid illuminans et illuminatum prefulgens: et hoc modo viros appellamus illustres, vel quia potestate illuminati alios et iustitia et karitate illuminant, vel quia excellenter magistrati excellenter magistrent, ut Seneca et Numa Pompilius. Et vulgare de quo loquimur et sublimatum est magistratu et potestate, et suos honore sublimat et gloria.

3. Magistratu quidem sublimatum videtur, cum de tot rudibus Latinorum vocabulis, de tot perplexis constructionibus, de tot defectivis prolationibus, de tot rusticanis accentibus, tam egregium, tam extricatum, tam perfectum et tam urbanum videamus electum, ut Cynus Pistoriensis et amicus eius ostendunt in cantionibus suis.

4. Quod autem exaltatum sit potestate, videtur. Et quid maioris potestatis est quam quod humana corda versare potest, ita ut nolentem volentem et volentem nolentem faciat, velut ipsum et fecit et facit ?

5. Quod autem honore sublimet, in promptu est. Nonne domestici sui reges, marchiones, comites et magnates quoslibet fama vincunt?

6. Minime hoc probatione indiget. Quantum vero suos familiares gloriosos efficiat, nos ipsi novimus, qui huius dulcedine glorie nostrum exilium postergamus.

7. Quare ipsum illustre merito profiteri debemus.

XVIII

1. Neque sine ratione ipsum vulgare illustre decusamus adiectione secunda, videlicet ut id cardinale vocetur. Nam sicut totum hostium cardinem sequitur ut, quo cardo vertitur, versetur et ipsum, seu introrsum seu extrorsum flectatur, sic et universus municipalium grex vulgarium vertitur et revertitur, movetur et pausat secundum quod istud, quod quidem vere paterfamilias esse videtur. Nonne cotidie extirpat sentosos frutices de ytalia silva? Nonne cotidie vel plantas inserit vel plantaria plantat? Quid aliud agricole sui satagunt nisi ut amoveant et admoveant, ut dictum est? Quare prorsus tanto decusari vocabulo promeretur.

2 Quia vero aulicum nominamus illud causa est quod, si aulam nos Ytali haberemus, palatinum foret. Nam si aula totius regni comunis est domus et omnium regni partium gubernatrix augusta, quicquid tale est ut omnibus sit comune nec proprium ulli, conveniens est ut in ea conversetur et habitet, nec aliquod aliud habitaculum tanto dignum est habitante: hoc nempe videtur esse id de quo loquimur vulgare.

3. Et hinc est quod in regiis omnibus conversantes semper illustri vulgari locuntur; hinc etiam est quod nostrum illustre velut accola peregrinatur et in humilibus hospitatur asilis, cum aula vacemus.

4. Est etiam merito curiale dicendum, quia curialitas nil aliud est quam librata regula eorum que peragenda sunt: et quia statera huiusmodi librationis tantum in excellentissimis curiis esse solet, hinc est quod quicquid in actibus nostris bene libratum est, curiale dicatur. Unde cum istud in excellentissima Ytalorum curia sit libratum, dici curiale meretur.

5. Sed dicere quod in excellentissima Ytalorum curia sit libratum, videtur nugatio, cum curia careamus. Ad quod facile respondetur. Nam licet curia, secundum quod unita accipitur, ut curia regis Alamannie, in Ytalia non sit, membra tamen eius non desunt; et sicut membra illius uno Principe uniuntur, sic membra huius gratioso lumine rationis unita sunt. Quare falsum esset dicere curia carere Ytalos, quanquam Principe careamus, quoniam curiam habemus, licet corporaliter sit dispersa.

XIX

1. Hoc autem vulgare quod illustre, cardinale, aulicum et curiale ostensum est, dicimus esse illud quod vulgare latium appellatur. Nam sicut quoddam vulgare est invenire quod proprium est Cremone, sic quoddam est invenire quod proprium est Lombardie; et sicut est invenire aliquod quod sit proprium Lombardie, [sic] est invenire aliquod quod sit totius sinistre Ytalie proprium; et sicut omnia hec est invenire, sic et illud quod totius Ytalie est. Et sicut illud cremonense ac illud lombardum et tertium semilatium dicitur, sic istud, quod totius Ytalie est, latium vulgare vocatur. Hoc enim usi sunt doctores illustres qui lingua vulgari poetati sunt in Ytalia, ut Siculi, Apuli, Tusci, Romandioli, Lombardi et utriusque Marchie viri.

2. Et quia intentio nostra, ut polliciti sumus in principio huius operis, est doctrinam de vulgari eloquentia tradere, ab ipso tanquam ab excellentissimo incipientes, quos putamus ipso dignos uti, et propter quid, et quomodo, nec non ubi, et quando, et ad quos ipsum dirigendum sit, in inmediatis libris tractabimus.

3. Quibus illuminatis, inferiora vulgaria illuminare curabimus, gradatim descendentes ad illud quod unius solius familie proprium est.

LIBER SECUNDUS

I

1. Sollicitantes iterum celeritatem ingenii nostri et ad calamum frugi operis redeuntes, ante omnia confitemur latium vulgare illustre tam prosayce quam metrice decere proferri. Sed quia ipsum prosaycantes ab avientibus magis accipiunt et quia quod avietum est prosaycantibus permanere videtur exemplar, et non e converso (que quendam videntur prebere primatum), primo secundum quod metricum est ipsum carminemus, ordine pertractantes illo quem in fine primi libri polluximus.

2. Queramus igitur prius, utrum omnes versificantes vulgariter debeant illud uti. Et superficietenus videtur quod sic, quia omnis qui versificatur suos versus exornare debet in quantum potest; quare, cum nullum sit tam grandis exornationis quam vulgare illustre, videtur quod quisquis versificator debeat ipsum uti.

3. Preterea: quod optimum est in genere suo, si suis inferioribus misceatur, non solum nil derogare videtur eis, sed ea meliorare videtur; quare si quis versificator, quanquam rude versificetur, ipsum sue ruditati admisceat, non solum bene facit, sed ipsum sic facere oportere videtur: multo magis opus est adiutorio illis qui pauca, quam qui multa possunt. Et sic apparet quod omnibus versificantibus liceat ipsum uti.

4. Sed hoc falsissimum est; quia nec semper excellentissime poetantes debent illud induere, sicut per inferius pertractata perpendi poterit.

5. Exigit ergo istud sibi consimiles viros, quemadmodum alii nostri mores et habitus; exigit enim magnificentia magna potentes, purpura viros nobiles: sic et hoc excellentes ingenio et scientia querit, et alios aspernatur, ut per inferiora patebit.

6. Nam quicquid nobis convenit, vel gratia generis, vel speciei, vel individui convenit, ut sentire, ridere, militare. Sed hoc non convenit nobis gratia generis, quia etiam brutis conveniret; nec gratia speciei, quia cunctis hominibus esset conveniens, de quo nulla questio est - nemo enim montaninis rusticana tractantibus hoc dicet esse conveniens -; convenit ergo individui gratia.

7. Sed nichil individuo convenit nisi per proprias dignitates, puta mercari, militare ac regere; quare si convenientia respiciunt dignitates, hoc est dignos, et quidam digni, quidam digniores, quidam dignissimi esse possunt, manifestum est quod bona dignis, meliora dignioribus, optima dignissimis convenient.

8. Et cum loquela non aliter sit necessarium instrumentum nostre conceptionis quam equus militis, et optimis militibus optimi conveniant equi, ut dictum est, optimis conceptionibus optima loquela conveniet. Sed optime conceptiones non possunt esse nisi ubi scientia et ingenium est; ergo optima loquela non convenit nisi illis in quibus ingenium et scientia est. Et sic non omnibus versificantibus optima loquela conveniet, cum plerique sine scientia et ingenio versificentur, et per consequens nec optimum vulgare. Quapropter, si non omnibus competit, non omnes ipsum debent uti, quia inconvenienter agere nullus debet.

9. Et ubi dicitur, quod quilibet suos versus exornare debet in quantum potest, verum esse testamur; sed nec bovem epiphiatum nec balteatum suem dicemus ornatum, immo potius deturpatum ridemus illum: est enim exornatio alicuius convenientis additio.

10. Ad illud ubi dicitur, quod superiora inferioribus admixta profectum adducunt, dicimus verum esse quando cesset discretio: puta si aurum cum argento conflemus; sed si discretio remanet, inferiora vilescunt: puta cum formose mulieres deformibus admiscentur. Unde cum sententia versificantium semper verbis discretive mixta remaneat, si non fuerit optima, optimo sociata vulgari non melior sed deterior apparebit, quemadmodum turpis mulier si auro vel serico vestiatur.

II

1. Postquam non omnes versificantes, sed tantum excellentissimos illustre uti vulgare debere astruximus, consequens est astruere, utrum omnia ipso tractanda sint aut non; et si non omnia, que ipso digna sunt segregatim ostendere.

2. Circa quod primo reperiendum est id quod intelligimus per illud quod dicimus dignum. Et dicimus dignum esse quod dignitatem habet, sicut nobile quod nobilitatem; et si cognito habituante habituatum cognoscitur in quantum huiusmodi, cognita dignitate cognoscemus et dignum.

3. Est etenim dignitas meritorum effectus sive terminus: ut, cum quis bene meruit, ad boni dignitatem profectum esse dicimus, cum male vero, ad mali; puta bene militantem ad victorie dignitatem, bene autem regentem ad regni, nec non mendacem ad ruboris dignitatem, et latronem ad eam que est mortis.

4. Sed cum in bene merentibus fiant comparationes, et in aliis etiam, ut quidam bene quidam melius quidam optime, quidam male quidam peius quidam pessime mereantur, et huiusmodi comparationes non fiant nisi per respectum ad terminum meritorum, quem dignitatem dicimus (ut dictum est), manifestum est

ut dignitates inter se comparentur secundum magis et minus, ut quedam magne, quedam maiores, quedam maxime sint; et per consequens aliquid dignum, aliquid dignius, aliquid dignissimum esse constat.

5. Et cum comparatio dignitatum non fiat circa idem obiectum, sed circa diversa, ut dignius dicamus quod maioribus, dignissimum quod maximis dignum est (quia nichil eodem dignius esse potest), manifestum est quod optima optimis secundum rerum exigentiam digna sunt. Unde cum hoc quod dicimus illustre sit optimum aliorum vulgarium, consequens est ut sola optima digna sint ipso tractari, que quidem tractandorum dignissima nuncupamus.

6. Nunc autem que sint ipsa venemur. Ad quorum evidentiam sciendum est, quod sicut homo tripliciter spirituatus est, videlicet vegetabili, animali et rationali, triplex iter perambulat. Nam secundum quod vegetabile quid est, utile querit, in quo cum plantis comunicat; secundum quod animale, delectabile, in quo cum brutis; secundum quod rationale, honestum querit, in quo solus est, vel angelice sociatur [nature]. Propter hec tria quicquid agimus, agere videmur.

7. Et quia in quolibet istorum quedam sunt maiora, quedam maxima, secundum quod talia, que maxima sunt maxime pertractanda videntur, et per consequens maximo vulgari.

8. Sed disserendum est que maxima sint. Et primo in eo quod est utile: in quo, si callide consideremus intentum omnium querentium utilitatem, nil aliud quam salutem inveniemus. Secundo in eo quod est delectabile: in quo dicimus illud esse maxime delectabile quod per pretiosissimum obiectum appetitus delectat: hoc autem venus est. Tertio in eo quod est honestum: in quo nemo dubitat esse virtutem. Quare hec tria, salus videlicet, venus et virtus, apparent esse illa magnalia que sint maxime pertractanda, hoc est ea que maxime sunt ad ista, ut armorum probitas, amoris accensio et directio voluntatis.

9. Circa que sola, si bene recolimus, illustres viros invenimus vulgariter poetasse, scilicet Bertramum de Bornio arma, Arnaldum Danielem amorem, Gerardum de Bornello rectitudinem; Cynum Pistoriensem amorem, amicum eius rectitudinem. Bertramus etenim ait

Non posc mudar c’un cantar non exparja.

Arnaldus:

L’aura amara fal bruol brancuz clarzir.

Gerardus:

Per solaz reveillar che s’es trop endormitz.

Cynus:

Digno sono eo de morte.

Amicus eius:

Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire.

10. Arma vero nullum latium adhuc invenio poetasse. Hiis proinde visis, que canenda sint vulgari altissimo innotescunt.

III

1. Nunc autem quo modo ea coartare debemus que tanto sunt digna vulgari, sollicite vestigare conemur.

2. Volentes igitur modum tradere quo ligari hec digna existant, primo dicimus esse ad memoriam reducendum, quod vulgariter poetantes sua poemata multimode protulerunt, quidam per cantiones, quidam per ballatas, quidam per sonitus, quidam per alios inlegitimos et inregulares modos, ut inferius ostendetur.

3. Horum autem modorum cantionum modum excellentissimum esse pensamus; quare si excellentissima excellentissimis digna sunt, ut superius est probatum, illa que excellentissimo sunt digna vulgari, modo excellentissimo digna sunt, et per consequens in cantionibus pertractanda.

4. Quod autem modus cantionum sit talis ut dictum est, pluribus potest rationibus indagari. Prima quidem quia, cum quicquid versificamur sit cantio, sole cantiones hoc vocabulum sibi sortite sunt; quod nunquam sine vetusta provisione processit.

5. Adhuc: quicquid per se ipsum efficit illud ad quod factum est, nobilius esse videtur quam quod extrinseco indiget: sed cantiones per se totum quod debent efficiunt, quod ballate non faciunt: indigent enim plausoribus, ad quos edite sunt; ergo cantiones nobiliores ballatis esse sequitur extimandas, et per consequens nobilissimum aliorum esse modum illarum, cum nemo dubitet quin ballate sonitus nobilitate excellant.

6. Preterea: illa videntur nobiliora esse que conditori suo magis honoris afferunt: sed cantiones magis deferunt suis conditoribus quam ballate; igitur nobiliores sunt, et per consequens modus earum nobilissimus aliorum.

7. Preterea: que nobilissima sunt carissime conservantur: sed inter ea que cantata sunt, cantiones carissime conservantur, ut constat visitantibus libros; ergo cantiones nobilissime sunt, et per consequens modus earum nobilissimus est.

8. Ad hec: in artificiatis illud est nobilissimum quod totam comprehendit artem: cum igitur ea que cantantur artificiata existant, et in solis cantionibus ars tota comprehendatur, cantiones nobilissime sunt, et sic modus earum nobilissimus aliorum. Quod autem tota comprehendatur in cantionibus ars

cantandi poetice, in hoc palatur, quod quicquid artis reperitur in omnibus aliis et in cantionibus reperitur; sed non convertitur hoc.

9. Signum autem horum que dicimus promptum in conspectu habetur; nam quicquid de cacuminibus illustrium capitum poetantium profluxit ad labia, in solis cantionibus invenitur.

10. Quare ad propositum patet quod ea que digna sunt vulgari altissimo in cantionibus tractanda sunt.

IV

1. Quando quidem aporiavimus extricantes qui sint aulico digni vulgari et que, nec non modum quem tanto dignamur honore ut solus altissimo vulgari conveniat, antequam migremus ad alia, modum cantionum, quem casu magis quam arte multi usurpare videntur, enucleemus; et qui hucusque casualiter est assumptus, illius artis ergasterium reseremus, modum ballatarurn et sonituum ommictentes, quia illum elucidare intendimus in quarto huius operis, cum de mediocri vulgari tractabimus.

2. Revisentes igitur ea que dicta sunt, recolimus nos eos qui vulgariter versificantur plerunque vocasse poetas: quod procul dubio rationabiliter eructare presumpsimus, quia prorsus poete sunt, si poesim recte consideremus; que nichil aliud est quam fictio rethorica musicaque poita.

3. Differunt tamen a magnis poetis, hoc est regularibus, quia magni sermone et arte regulari poetati sunt, hii vero casu, ut dictum est. Idcirco accidit ut, quantum illos proximius imitemur, tantum rectius poetemur. Unde nos doctrine operi intendentes, doctrinatas eorum poetrias emulari oportet.

4. Ante omnia ergo dicimus unumquenque debere materie pondus propriis humeris coequare, ne forte humerorum nimio gravata virtute in cenum cespitare necesse sit: hoc est quod magister noster Oratius precipit, cum in principio Poetrie ‘Sumite materiam ...’ dicit.

5. Deinde in hiis que dicenda occurrunt debemus discretione potiri, utrum tragice, sive comice, sive elegiace sint canenda. Per tragediam superiorem stilum inducimus, per comediam inferiorem, per elegiam stilum intelligimus miserorum.

6. Si tragice canenda videntur, tunc assumendum est vulgare illustre, et per consequens cantionem [oportet] ligare. Si vero comice, tunc quandoque mediocre quandoque humile vulgare sumatur; et huius discretionem in quarto

huius reservamus ostendere. Si autem elegiace, solum humile oportet nos sumere.

7. Sed ommittamus alios, et nunc, ut conveniens est, de stilo tragico pertractemus. Stilo equidem tragico tunc uti videmur, quando cum gravitate sententie tam superbia carminum quam constructionis elatio et excellentia vocabulorum concordat.

8. Qua[re], si bene recolimus summa summis esse digna iam fuisse probatum, et iste quem tragicum appellamus summus videtur esse stilorum, et illa que summe canenda distinximus isto solo sunt stilo canenda: videlicet salus, amor et virtus et que propter ea concipimus, dum nullo accidente vilescant.

9. Caveat ergo quilibet et discernat ea que dicimus; et quando hec tria pure cantare intendit, vel que ad ea directe ac pure secuntur, prius Elicone potatus, tensis fidibus ad supremum, secure plectrum tum movere incipiat.

10. Sed cautionem atque discretionem hanc accipere, sicut decet, hic opus et labor est, quoniam nunquam sine strenuitate ingenii et artis assiduitate scientiarumque habitu fieri potest. Et hii sunt quos poeta Eneidorum sexto Dei dilectos et ab ardente virtute sublimatos ad ethera deorumque filios vocat, quanquam figurate loquatur.

11. Et ideo confutetur illorum stultitia qui, arte scientiaque immunes, de solo ingenio confidentes, ad summa summe canenda prorumpunt; et a tanta presumptuositate desistant, et si anseres natura vel desidia sunt, nolint astripetam aquilam imitari.

V

1. De gravitate sententiarum vel satis dixisse videmur vel saltim totum quod operis est nostri: quapropter ad superbiam carminum festinemus.

2. Circa quod sciendum quod predecessores nostri diversis carminibus usi sunt in cantionibus suis, quod et moderni faciunt: sed nullum adhuc invenimus in carmen sillabicando endecadem transcendisse, nec a trisillabo descendisse. Et licet trisillabo carmine atque endecasillabo et omnibus intermediis cantores latii usi sint, pentasillabum et eptasillabum et endecasillabum in usu frequentiori habentur, et post hec trisillabum ante alia.

3. Quorum omnium endecasillabum videtur esse superbius, tam temporis occupatione quam capacitate sententie, constructionis et vocabulorum; quorum omnium specimen magis multiplicatur in illo, ut manifeste apparet: nam ubicunque ponderosa multiplicantur, [multiplicatur] et pondus.

4. Et hoc omnes doctores perpendisse videntur, cantiones illustres principiantes ab illo; ut Gerardus de Bornello:

Ara ausirez encabalitz cantarz

(quod carmen, licet decasillabum videatur, secundum rei veritatem endecasillabum est: nam due consonantes extreme non sunt de sillaba precedente, et licet propriam vocalem non habeant, virtutem sillabe non tamen ammictunt; signum autem est quod rithimus ibi una vocali perficitur, quod esse non posset nisi virtute alterius ibi subintellecte).

Rex Navarre:

De fin’amor si vient sen et bonté,

(ubi, si consideretur accentus et eius causa, endecasillabum esse constabit).

Guido Guinizelli:

Al cor gentil repara sempre amore.

Iudex de Columpnis de Messana:

Amor, che lungiamente m’ài menato.

Renaldus de Aquino:

Per fino amore vo sì letamente.

Cynus Pistoriensis:

Non spero che già mai per mia salute.

amicus eius:

Amor, che movi tua vertù da cielo.

5. Et licet hoc quod dictum est celeberrimum carmen, ut dignum est, videatur omnium aliorum, si eptasillabi aliqualem societatem assumat, dummodo principatum obtineat, clarius magisque sursum superbire videtur. Sed hoc ulterius elucidandum remaneat.

6. Et dicimus eptasillabum sequi illud quod maximum est in celebritate. Post hoc pentasillabum et deinde trisillabum ordinamus. Neasillabum vero, quia triplicatum trisillabum videbatur, vel nunquam in honore fuit vel propter fastidium absolevit.

7. Parisillabis vero propter sui ruditatem non utimur nisi raro: retinent enim naturam suorum numerorum, qui numeris imparibus quemadmodum materia forme, subsistunt.

8. Et sic, recolligentes predicta, endecasillabum videtur esse superbissimum carmen: et hoc est quod querebamus. Nunc autem restat investigandum de constructionibus elatis et fastigiosis vocabulis; et demum, fustibus torquibusque paratis, promissum fascem, hoc est cantionem, quo modo viere quis debeat, instruemus.

VI

1. Quia circa vulgare illustre nostra versatur intentio, quod nobilissimum est aliorum, et ea que digna sunt illo cantari discrevimus, que tria nobilissima sunt, ut superius est astructum, et modum cantionarium selegimus illis, tanquam aliorum modorum summum, et, ut ipsum perfectius edocere possimus, quedam iam preparavimus, stilum videlicet atque carmen, nunc de constructione agamus.

2. Est enim sciendum quod constructionem vocamus regulatam compaginem dictionum, ut Aristotiles phylosophatus est tempore Alexandri. Sunt enim quinque hic dictiones compacte regulariter, et unam faciunt constructionem.

3. Circa hanc quidem prius considerandum est quod constructionum alia congrua est, alia vero incongrua. Et quia, si primordium bene discretionis nostre recolimus, sola suprema venamur, nullum in nostra venatione locum habet incongrua, quia nec inferiorem gradum bonitatis promeruit. Pudeat ergo, pudeat ydiotas tantum audere deinceps ut ad cantiones prorumpant: quos non aliter deridemus quam cecum de coloribus distinguentem. Est ut videtur congrua quam sectamur.

4. Sed non minoris difficultatis accedit discretio priusquam quam querimus actingamus, videlicet urbanitate plenissimam. Sunt etenim gradus constructionum quamplures: videlicet insipidus, qui est rudium, ut Petrus amat multum dominam Bertam.

5. Est et pure sapidus, qui est rigidorum scolarium vel magistrorum, ut Piget me cunctis pietate maiorem, quicunque in exilio tabescentes patriam tantum sompniando revisunt; est et sapidus et venustus, qui est quorundam superficietenus rethoricam aurientium, ut Laudabilis discretio marchionis Estensis, et sua magnificentia preparata, cunctis illum facit esse dilectum; est et sapidus et venustus etiam et excelsus, qui est dictatorum illustrium, ut Eiecta maxima parte florum de sinu tuo, Florentia, nequicquam Trinacriam Totila secundus adivit.

6. Hunc gradum constructionis excellentissimum nominamus, et hic est quem querimus cum suprema venemur, ut dictum est.

Hoc solum illustres cantiones inveniuntur contexte, ut Gerardus:

Si per mon Sobretots non fos.
Folquetus de Marsilia:
Tan m’abellis l’amoros pensamen.
Arnaldus Danielis:

Sols sui che sai lo sobraffan chem sorz.
Namericus de Belnui:
Nuls hom non pot complir addrechamen.
Namericus de Peculiano:
Si com l’arbres che per sobrecarcar.
Rex Navarre:
Ire d’amor que en mon cor repaire.
Iudex de Messana:
Anchor che l’aigua per lo foco lassi.
Guido GuinizeIli:
Tegno de folle ‘mpresa a lo ver dire.
Guido Cavalcanti:
Poi che de doglia cor conven ch’io porti.
Cynus de Pistorio:
Avegna che io aggia più per tempo.
Amicus eius:
Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona.

7. Nec mireris, lector, de tot reductis autoribus ad memoriam: non enim hanc quam supremam vocamus constructionem nisi per huiusmodi exempla possumus indicare. Et fortassis utilissimum foret ad illam habituandam regulatos vidisse poetas, Virgilium videlicet, Ovidium Metamorfoseos, Statium atque Lucanum, nec non alios qui usi sunt altissimas prosas, ut Titum Livium, Plinium, Frontinum, Paulum Orosium, et multos alios quos amica sollicitudo nos visitare invitat.

8. Subsistant igitur ignorantie sectatores Guictonem Aretinum et quosdam alios extollentes, nunquam in vocabulis atque constructione plebescere desuetos.

VII

1. Grandiosa modo vocabula sub prelato stilo digna consistere, successiva nostre progressionis presentia lucidari expostulat.

2. Testamur proinde incipientes non minimum opus esse rationis discretionem vocabulorum habere, quoniam perplures eorum maneries inveniri posse videmus. Nam vocabulorum quedam puerilia, quedam muliebria, quedam virilia; et horum quedam silvestria, quedam urbana; et eorum que urbana vocamus, quedam pexa et lubrica, quedam yrsuta et reburra sentimus. Inter que quidem,

pexa atque yrsuta sunt illa que vocamus grandiosa, lubrica vero et reburra vocamus illa que in superfluum sonant; quemadmodum in magnis operibus quedam magnanimitatis sunt opera, quedam fumi: ubi, licet in superficie quidam consideretur ascensus, ex quo limitata virtutis linea prevaricatur, bone rationi non ascensus sed per altera declivia ruina constabit.

3. Intuearis ergo, lector, actente quantum ad exaceranda egregia verba te cribrare oportet: nam si vulgare illustre consideres, quo tragici debent uti poete vulgares, ut superius dictum est, quos informare intendimus, sola vocabula nobilissima in cribro tuo residere curabis.

4. In quorum numero nec puerilia propter sui simplicitatem, ut mamma et babbo, mate et pate, nec muliebria propter sui mollitiem, ut dolciada et placevole, nec silvestria propter austeritatem, ut greggia et cetra, nec urbana lubrica et reburra, ut femina et corpo, ullo modo poteris conlocare. Sola etenim pexa yrsutaque urbana tibi restare videbis, que nobilissima sunt et membra vulgaris illustris.

5. Et pexa vocamus illa que, trisillaba vel vicinissima trisillabitati, sine aspiratione, sine accentu acuto vel circumflexo, sine z vel x duplicibus, sine duarum liquidarum geminatione vel positione immediate post mutam, dolata quasi, loquentem cum quadam suavitate relinquunt: ut amore, donna, disio, virtute, donare, letitia, salute, securtate, defesa.

6. Yrsuta quoque dicimus omnia, preter hec, que vel necessaria vel ornativa videntur vulgaris illustris. Et necessaria quidem appellamus que campsare non possumus, ut quedam monosillaba, ut si, no, me, te, sé, à, è, i’, ò, u’, interiectiones et alia multa. Ornativa vero dicimus omnia polisillaba que, mixta cum pexis, pulcram faciunt armoniam compaginis, quamvis asperitatem habeant aspirationis et accentus et duplicium et liquidarum et prolixitatis: ut terra, honore, speranza, gravitate, alleviato, impossibilità, impossibilitate, benaventuratissimo, inanimatissimamente, disaventuratissimamente, sovramagnificentissimamente, quod endecasillabum est. Posset adhuc inveniri plurium sillabarum vocabulum sive verbum, sed quia capacitatem omnium nostrorum carminum superexcedit, rationi presenti non videtur obnoxium, sicut est illud honorificabilitudinitate, quod duodena perficitur sillaba in vulgari et in gramatica tredena perficitur in duobus obliquis.

7. Quomodo autem pexis yrsuta huiusmodi sint armonizanda per metra, inferius instruendum relinquimus. Et que iam dicta sunt de fastigiositate vocabulorum ingenue discretioni sufficiant.

VIII

1. Preparatis fustibus torquibusque ad fascem, nunc fasciandi tempus incumbit. Sed quia cuiuslibet operis cognitio precedere debet operationem, velut signum ante ammissionem sagipte vel iaculi, primo et principaliter qui sit iste fascis quem fasciare intendimus videamus.

2. Fascis iste igitur, si bene comminiscimur omnia prelibata, cantio est. Quapropter quid sit cantio videamus, et quid intelligimus cum dicimus cantionem.

3. Est enim cantio, secundum verum nominis significatum, ipse canendi actus vel passio, sicut lectio passio vel actus legendi. Sed divaricemus quod dictum est, utrum videlicet hec sit cantio prout est actus, vel prout est passio.

4. Et circa hoc considerandum est quod cantio dupliciter accipi potest: uno modo secundum quod fabricatur ab autore suo, et sic est actio - et secundum istum modum Virgilius primo Eneidorum dicit Arma virumque cano -; alio modo secundum quod fabricata profertur vel ab autore vel ab alio quicunque sit, sive cum soni modulatione proferatur, sive non: et sic est passio. Nam tunc agitur; modo vero agere videtur in alium, et sic tunc alicuius actio, modo quoque passio alicuius videtur. Et quia prius agitur ipsa quam agat, magis, immo prorsus denominari videtur ab eo quod agitur, et est actio alicuius, quam ab eo quod agit in alios. Signum autem huius est quod nunquam dicimus ‘Hec est cantio Petri’ eo quod ipsam proferat, sed eo quod fabricaverit illam.

5. Preterea disserendum est utrum cantio dicatur fabricatio verborum armonizatorum, vel ipsa modulatio. Ad quod dicimus, quod nunquam modulatio dicitur cantio, sed sonus, vel tonus, vel nota, vel melos. Nullus enim tibicen, vel organista, vel cytharedus melodiam suam cantionem vocat, nisi in quantum nupta est alicui cantioni; sed armonizantes verba opera sua cantiones vocant, et etiam talia verba in cartulis absque prolatore iacentia cantiones vocamus.

6. Et ideo cantio nichil aliud esse videtur quam actio completa dicentis verba modulationi armonizata: quapropter tam cantiones quas nunc tractamus, quam ballatas et sonitus et omnia cuiuscunque modi verba sunt armonizata vuigariter et regulariter, cantiones esse dicemus.

7. Sed quia sola vulgaria ventilamus, regulata linquentes, dicimus vulgarium poematum unum esse suppremum, quod per superexcellentiam cantionem vocamus: quod autem suppremum quid sit cantio, in tertio huius libri capitulo est probatum. Et quoniam quod diffinitum est pluribus generale videtur, resumentes diffinitum iam generale vocabulum per quasdam differentias solum quod petimus distinguamus.

8. Dicimus ergo quod cantio, in quantum per superexcellentiam dicitur, ut et nos querimus, est equalium stantiarum sine responsorio ad unam sententiam tragica coniugatio, ut nos ostendimus cum dicimus

Donne che avete intelletto d’amore.

Quod autem dicimus ‘tragica coniugatio’ est quia, cum comice fiat hec coniugatio, cantilenam vocamus per diminutionem: de qua in quarto huius tractare intendimus.

9. Et sic patet quid cantio sit, et prout accipitur generaliter et prout per superexcellentiam vocamus eam. Satis etiam patere videtur quid intelligimus cum cantionem vocamus, et per consequens quid sit ille fascis quem ligare molimur.

IX

1. Quia, ut dictum est, cantio est coniugatio stantiarum, ignorato quid sit stantia necesse est cantionem ignorare: nam ex diffinientium cognitione diffiniti resultat cognitio; et ideo consequenter de stantia est agendum, ut scilicet investigemus quid ipsa sit et quid per eam intelligere volumus.

2. Et circa hoc sciendum est quod hoc vocabulum per solius artis respectum inventum est, videlicet ut in quo tota cantionis ars esset contenta, illud diceretur stantia, hoc est mansio capax sive receptaculum totius artis. Nam quemadmodum cantio est gremium totius sententie, sic stantia totam artem ingremiat; nec licet aliquid artis sequentibus arrogare, sed solam artem antecedentis induere.

3. Per quod patet quod ipsa de qua loquimur erit congregatio sive compages omnium eorum que cantio sumit ab arte: quibus divaricatis, quam querimus descriptio innotescet.

4. Tota igitur, scilicet ars cantionis, circa tria videtur consistere: primo circa cantus divisionem, secundo circa partium habitudinem, tertio circa numerum carminum et sillabarum.

5. De rithimo vero mentionem non facimus, quia de propria cantionis arte non est. Licet enim in qualibet stantia rithimos innovare et eosdem reiterare ad libitum: quod, si de propria cantionis arte rithimus esset, minime liceret: quod dictum est. Si quid autem rithimi servare interest huius quod est ars, illud comprehenditur ibi cum dicimus ‘partium habitudinem’.

6. Quare sic colligere possumus ex predictis diffinientes, et dicere stantiam esse sub certo cantu et habitudine limitatam carminum et sillabarum compagem.QuareQuare

X

1. Scientes quia rationale animal homo est et quia sensibilis anima et corpus est animal, et ignorantes de hac anima quid ea sit, vel de ipso corpore, perfectam hominis cognitionem habere non possumus: quia cognitionis perfectio uniuscuiusque terminatur ad ultima elementa, sicut magister sapientum in principio Physicorum testatur. Igitur ad habendam cantionis cognitionem quam inhiamus, nunc diffinientia suum diffiniens sub compendio ventilemus, et primo de cantu, deinde de habitudine, et postmodum de carminibus et sillabis percontemur.

2. Dicimus ergo quod omnis stantia ad quandam odam recipiendam armonizata est. Sed in modis diversificari videntur. Quia quedam sunt sub una oda continua usque ad ultimum progressive, hoc est sine iteratione modulationis cuiusquam et sine diesi - diesim dicimus deductionem vergentem de una oda in aliam (hanc voltam vocamus, cum vulgus alloquimur) -; et huiusmodi stantia usus est fere in omnibus cantionibus suis Arnaldus Danielis, et nos eum secuti sumus cum diximus

Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra.

3. Quedam vero sunt diesim patientes: et diesis esse non potest, secundum quod eam appellamus, nisi reiteratio unius ode fiat, vel ante diesim, vel post, vel undique.

4. Si ante diesim repetitio fiat, stantiam dicimus habere pedes; et duos habere decet, licet quandoque tres fiant, rarissime tamen. Si repetitio fiat post diesim, tunc dicimus stantiam habere versus. Si ante non fiat repetitio, stantiam dicimus habere frontem. Si post non fiat, dicimus habere sirma, sive caudam.

5. Vide igitur, lector, quanta licentia data sit cantiones poetantibus, et considera cuius rei causa tam largum arbitrium usus sibi asciverit; et si recto calle ratio te duxerit, videbis auctoritatis dignitate sola quod dicimus esse concessum.

6. Satis hinc innotescere potest quomodo cantionis ars circa cantus divisionem consistat; et ideo ad habitudinem procedamus.

XI

1. Videtur nobis hec quam habitudinem dicimus maxima pars eius quod artis est; hec etenim circa cantus divisionem atque contextum carminum et rithimorum

relationem consistit; quapropter diligentissime videtur esse tractanda.

2. Incipientes igitur dicimus quod frons cum versibus, pedes cum cauda vel sirmate, nec non pedes cum versibus, in stantia se diversimode habere possunt.

3. Nam quandoque frons versus excedit in sillabis et carminibus, vel excedere potest; et dicimus ‘potest’ quoniam habitudinem hanc adhuc non vidimus.

4. Quandoque in carminibus excedere et in sillabis superari potest, ut si frons esset pentametra et quilibet versus esset dimeter, et metra frontis eptasillaba et versus endecasillaba essent.

5. Quandoque versus frontem superant sillabis et carminibus, ut in illa quam dicimus,

Tragemi de la mente Amor la stiva.

fuit hec tetrametra frons, tribus endecasillabis et uno eptasillabo contexta; non etenim potuit in pedes dividi, cum equalitas carminum et sillabarum requiratur in pedibus inter se, et etiam in versibus inter se.

6. Et quemadmodum dicimus de fronte, dicimus et de versibus. Possent etenim versus frontem superare carminibus, et sillabis superari, puta si versus duo essent et uterque trimeter, et eptasillaba metra, et frons esset pentametra, duobus endecasillabis et tribus eptasillabis contexta.

7. Quandoque vero pedes caudam superant carminibus et sillabis, ut in illa quam diximus

Amor, che movi tua virtù da cielo.

8. Quandoque pedes a sirmate superantur in toto, ut in illa quam diximus

Donna pietosa e di novella etate.

9. Et quemadmodum diximus frontem posse superare carminibus, sillabis superatam (et e converso), sic de sirmate dicimus.

10. Pedes quoque versus in numero superant et superantur ab hiis: possunt enim esse in stantia tres pedes et duo versus, et tres versus et duo pedes; nec hoc numero limitamur, quin liceat plures et pedes et versus simul contexere.

11. Et quemadmodum de victoria carminum et sillabarum diximus inter alia, nunc etiam inter pedes et versus dicimus; nam eodem modo vinci et vincere possunt.

12. Nec pretermictendum est quod nos e contrario regulatis poetis pedes accipimus, quia illi carmen ex pedibus, nos vero ex carminibus pedem constare dicimus, ut satis evidenter apparet.

13. Nec etiam pretermictendum est quin iterum asseramus pedes ab invicem necessario carminum et sillabarum equalitatem et habitudinem accipere, quia non aliter cantus repetitio fieri posset. Hoc idem in versibus esse servandum astruimus.

XII

1. Est etiam, ut superius dictum est, habitudo quedam quam carmina contexendo considerare debemus: et ideo rationem faciamus de illa, repetentes proinde que superius de carminibus diximus.

2. In usu nostro maxime tria carmina frequentando prerogativam habere videntur, endecasillabum scilicet, eptasillabum et pentasillabum; que trisillabum ante alia sequi astruximus.

3. Horum prorsus, cum tragice poetari conamur, endecasillabum propter quandam excellentiam in contextu vincendi privilegium promeretur. Nam quedam stantia est que solis endecasillabis gaudet esse contexta, ut illa Guidonis de Florentia

Donna me prega, perch'io volgl[i]o dire;
et etiam nos dicimus
Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore.

Hoc etiam Yspani usi sunt - et dico Yspanos qui poetati sunt in vulgari oc: Namericus de Belnui,

Nuls hom non pot complir adrechamen.

4. Quedam est in qua tantum eptasillabum intexitur unum: et hoc esse non potest nisi ubi frons est vel cauda, quoniam, ut dictum est, in pedibus atque versibus actenditur equalitas carminum et sillabarum.

5. Propter quod etiam nec numerus impar carminum potest esse ubi frons vel cauda non est; sed ubi hec sunt, vel altera sola, pari et impari numero in carminibus licet uti ad libitum.

6. Et sicut quedam stantia est uno solo eptasillabo conformata, sic duobus, tribus, quatuor, quinque videtur posse contexi, dummodo in tragico vincat endecasillabum et principiet. Verumtamen quosdam ab eptasillabo tragice principiasse invenimus, videlicet [Guidonem Guinizelli], Guidonem de Ghisileriis et Fabrutium Bononienses:

Di fermo sofferire,
et
Donna, lo fermo core,
et
Lo meo lontano gire;

et quosdam alios. Sed si ad eorum sensum subtiliter intrare velimus, non sine quodam elegie umbraculo hec tragedia processisse videbitur.

7. De pentasillabo quoque non sic concedimus: in dictamine magno sufficit enim unicum pentasillabum in tota stantia conseri, vel duo ad plus [in pedibus]; et dico ‘pedibus’ propter necessitatem qua pedibus, versibusque, cantatur.

8. Minime autem trisillabum in tragico videtur esse sumendum per se subsistens: et dico ‘per se subsistens’ quia per quandam rithimorum repercussionem frequenter videtur assumptum, sicut inveniri potest in illa Guidonis Florentini,

Donna me prega,

et in illa quam diximus,

Poscia ch’Amor del tutto m’ha lasciato.

Nec per se ibi carmen est omnino, sed pars endecasillabi tantum, ad rithimum precedentis carminis velut eco respondens.

9. Hoc etiam precipue actendendum est circa carminum habitudinem, quod, si eptasillabum interseratur in primo pede, quem situm accipit ibi, eundem resumat in altero: puta, si pes trimeter primum et ultimum carmen endecasillabum habet et medium, hoc est secundum, eptasillabum, [et pes alter habeat secundum eptasillabum] et extrema endecasillaba: non aliter ingeminatio cantus fieri posset, ad quam pedes fiunt, ut dictum est; et per consequens pedes esse non possent.

10. Et quemadmodum de pedibus, dicimus et de versibus: in nullo enim pedes et versus differre videmus nisi in situ, quia hii ante, hii post diesim stantie nominantur. Et etiam quemadmodum de trimetro pede, et de omnibus aliis servandum esse asserimus; et sicut de uno eptasillabo, sic de pluribus et de pentasillabo et omni alio dicimus.

Satis hinc, lector, elicere sufficienter potes [qua] qualit[ate] tibi carminum habituanda sit stantia habitudinem[que] circa carmina consideranda[m] videre.

XIII

1. Rithimorum quoque relationi vacemus, nichil de rithimo secundum se modo tractantes; proprium enim eorum tractatum in posterum prorogamus, cum de mediocri poemate intendemus.

2 In principio igitur huius capituli quedam resecanda videntur. Unum est stantia sine rithimo, in qua nulla rithimorum habitudo actenditur; et huiusmodi stantiis usus est Arnaldus Danielis frequentissime, velut ibi:

Sem fos Amor de joi donar;
et nos dicimus
Al poco giorno.

Aliud est stantia cuius omnia carmina eundem rithimum reddunt, in qua superfluum esse constat habitudinem querere. Sic proinde restat circa rithimos mixtos debere insisti.

3. Et primo sciendum est quod in hoc amplissimam sibi licentiam fere omnes assumunt, et ex hoc maxime totius armonie dulcedo intenditur.

4. Sunt etenim quidam qui non omnes quandoque desinentias carminum rithimantur in eadem stantia, sed easdem repetunt sive rithimantur in aliis, sicut fuit Gottus Mantuanus, qui suas multas et bonas cantiones nobis oretenus intimavit. Hic semper in stantia unum carmen incomitatum texebat, quod clavem vocabat; et sicut de uno licet, licet etiam de duobus, et forte de pluribus.

5. Quidam alii sunt, et fere omnes cantionum inventores, qui nullum in stantia carmen incomitatum relinquunt quin sibi rithimi concrepantiam reddant, vel unius vel plurium.

6. Et quidam diversos faciunt esse rithimos eorum que post diesim carmina sunt a rithimis eorum que sunt ante; quidam vero non sic, sed desinentias anterioris stantie inter postera carmina referentes intexunt. Sepissime tamen hoc fit in desinentia primi posteriorum, quam plerique rithimantur ei que est priorum posterioris; quod non aliud esse videtur quam quedam ipsius stantie. concatenatio pulcra.

7. De rithimorum quoque habitudine, prout sunt in fronte vel in cauda, videtur omnis optata licentia concedenda; pulcerrime tamen se habent ultimorum carminum desinentie si cum rithimo in silentium cadant.

8. In pedibus vero cavendum est; et habitudinem quandam servatam esse invenimus. Et, discretionem facientes, dicimus quod pes vel pari vel impari metro completur; et utrobique comitata et incomitata desinentia esse potest; nam in pari metro nemo dubitat; in alio vero, si quis dubius est, recordetur ea que diximus in preinmediato capitulo de trisillabo, quando pars existens endecasillabi velut eco respondet.

9. Et si in altero pedum exsortem rithimi desinentiam esse contingat, omnimode in altero sibi instauratio fiat. Si vero quelibet desinentia in altero pede rithimi consortium habeat, in altero prout libet referre vel innovare desinentias licet, vel totaliter vel in parte, dumtaxat precedentium ordo servetur in totum; puta, si extreme desinentie trimetri, hoc est prima et ultima, concrepabunt in primo pede, sic secundi extremas desinentias convenit concrepare; et qualem se in primo media videt, comitatam quidem vel incomitatam, talis in secundo resurgat; et sic de aliis pedibus est servandum.

10. In versibus quoque fere semper hac lege perfruimur; et ‘fere’ dicimus quia propter concatenationem prenotatam et combinationem desinentiarum ultimarum quandoque ordinem iam dictum perverti contingit.

11. Preterea nobis bene convenire videtur ut que cavenda sunt circa rithimos huic appendamus capitulo, cum in isto libro nichil ulterius de rithimorum doctrina tangere intendamus.

12. Tria ergo sunt que circa rithimorum positionem potiri dedecet aulice poetantem: nimia scilicet eiusdem rithimi repercussio, nisi forte novum aliquid atque intentatum artis hoc sibi preroget; ut nascentis militie dies, qui cum nulla prerogativa suam indignatur preferire dietam: hoc etenim nos tacere nisi sumus ibi,

Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna;

secundum vero est ipsa inutilis equivocatio, que semper sententie quicquam derogare videtur; et tertium est rithimorum asperitas, nisi forte sit lenitati permixta: nam lenium asperorumque rithimorum mixtura ipsa tragedia nitescit.

13. Et hec de arte, prout habitudinem respicit, tanta sufficiant.

XIV

1. Ex quo duo que sunt artis in cantione satis [sufficienter] tractavimus, nunc de tertio videtur esse tractandum, videlicet de numero carminum et sillabarum. Et primo secundum totam stantiam videre oportet aliquid; deinde secundum partes eius videbimus.

2. Nostra igitur primo refert discretionem facere inter ea que canenda occurrunt, quia quedam stantie prolixitatem videntur appetere, quedam non. Nam cum ea que dicimus cuncta vel circa dextrum aliquid vel sinistrum canamus - ut quandoque persuasorie quandoque dissuasorie, quandoque gratulanter quandoque yronice, quandoque laudabiliter quandoque contemptive canere contingit -, que circa sinistra sunt verba semper ad extremum festinent, et alia decenti prolixitate passim veniant ad extremum ...

DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA (TRADUZIONE) di Gian Giorgio Trissino

Gian Giorgio Trissino dal Vello d’Oro è stato un umanista italiano. Poeta e tragediografo, si interessò di linguistica e architettura, oltre a svolgere attività diplomatiche per conto del papato. Amico e mentore di Andrea Palladio, tradusse il De vulgari eloquentia di Dante Alighieri nel 1529. Alla sua tesi si dimostrarono particolarmente sensibili (e ostili) i letterati toscani.

Gian Giorgio Trissino dal Vello d'Oro (1478 – 1550)

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LIBRO I

CωMINCIA IL PRIMω LIBRω DE LA VωLGARE εLωQUεNZIA

DI DANTE ALIGIERI FIωRENTINω,

TRADωTTω IN LINGUA ITALIANA.

Che coʃa sia il parlar vωlgare, ε cωme è *differεnte dal Grammaticale.*
CAPITωLω PRIMω

Nωn ritrovandω iω, che alcunω avanti mε, habbia de la vωlgare εlωquεnzia niuna coʃa trattatω, ε vedεndω questa cωtal εlωquεnzia εssere veramente necessaria a tutti; Cωnciò sia, che ad essa nωn sωlamente gli homini, ma anchωra le' femine, εt i piccωli fanciulli, in quantω la natura permette, si sforzinω pervenire, ε volendo alquantω lucidare la discreziωne di cωlωrω, i quali cωme ciεchi passeggianω per le piaze, ε pensanω spesse vωlte le coʃe pωsteriωri εssere anteriωri; cωn lω ajutω, che Diω ci manda dal Cielω, si sfωrzaremω di dar giωvamentω al parlare de le gεnti vωlgari. Né sωlamente l'acqua del nostrω ingegnω a sì fatta bevanda piglieremω; ma anchωra pigliandω, o verω cωmpilandω le coʃe migliωri da gli altri, quelle cωn le nostre meʃcωleremω, acciò, che d'indi pωssiamω dar bere unω dωlcissimω hydromεle; Hora, perciò, che ciascuna dωttrina dεve, nωn prωvare, ma aprire il suω suggεttω, acciò si sappia, che cosa sia quella, ne la quale essa dimora; Dicω, che 'l parlar vωlgare chiamω quellω, nel quale i fanciulli sωnω assuefatti da gli assistεnti, quandω primiεramente cωmincianω a distinguere le vωci; o verω cωme più briεvemente si può dire, il vωlgar parlare affermω εssere quellω, il quale sεnz'altra rεgωla imitandω la Balia s'apprεnde. εcci anchωra un altrω secωndω parlare, il quale i Rωmani chiamanω Grammatica; ε questω secωndariω hannω parimente' i Grεci, εt altri, ma nωn tutti; perciò, che pochi a l'habitω di essω pervεngωnω; Cωnciò sia, che senωn per spaziω di tεmpω, εt assiduità di studiω si ponnω prεndere le regωle, ε la dωttrina di lui. Di questi dui parlari adunque il vωlgare è più nobile, sì perché fu il primω, che fωsse da l'humana generaziωne uʃatω, sì εziandiω perché di essω tuttω 'l mωndω ragiωna; avegna, che in divεrsi vωcabωli, ε divεrse prωlaziωni sia diviʃω; sì anchωra per εssere naturale a nωi, εssεndo quell'altrω artificiale. E di questω più nobile è la nostra intenziωne di trattare'.

Che l’homω sωlω ha il cωmɛrciω del parlare.

CAP. II

Questω è il nostrω verω, ɛ primω parlare; nωn dicω ‘nostrω’, perché altrω parlare ci sia, chɛ quellω de l’homω; perciò, che fra tutte le coſe, che sωnω, sωlamente a l’homω, fu datω il parlare, sɛndω a lui necessariω sωlω; cɛrtω nωn a gli angeli, nωn a gli animali inferiωri fu necessariω parlare; adunque sarɛbbe statω datω in vanω a cωstωrω, non havɛndω biſognω di essω. ɛ la natura certamente abωrriſce di fare coſa alcuna in vanω. Se vωlemω poi sωttilmente cωnsiderare la intenziωne del parlar nostrω, niun’altra ce ne trωveremω, chɛ il manifestare ad altri i cωncɛtti de la mente nostra. Havendω adunque gli angeli prωntissima ɛt inɛffabile sufficiɛnzia d’intellɛttω da chiarire i lωrω glωriωſi cωncɛtti, per la quale sufficiɛnzia d’intellettω l’unω è tωtalmente notω a l’altrω, o verω per sé, o almenω per quel fulgentissimω specchiω, nel quale tutti sωnω rappreſentati bellissimi, ɛt in cui avidissimi si spɛcchianω; Per tantω pare, che di niunω segnω di parlare habianω havutω mestiɛri; ma chi ωppωnesse a questω, allegandω quɛi spiriti, che cascorωnω dal Ciɛlω; a tale ωppωſiziωne dωppiamente’ si può rispondere; prima, che quandω nωi trattiamω di quelle coſe, che sωnω a bɛne ɛssere, devemω ɛssi laſciar da parte; cωnciò sia, che questi pervɛrsi nωn volserω ɛxpettar la divina cura. Secωnda risposta, ɛ megliω, è, che questi Demonii a manifestare fra sé la lωrω perfidia, nωn hannω biſognω di cωnωſcere, senωn qualche coſa di ciascunω, perché è, ɛ quantω è, il che certamente sannω; perciò, che si cωnωbberω l’un l’altrω avanti la ruina lωrω. A gli animali inferiωri poi nωn fu biſognω prωvedere di parlare; cωnciò sia, che per sωlω istintω di natura sianω guidati. ɛ poi tutti quelli animali, che sωnω di una medeſima spɛcie, hannω le medeſime acziωni, ɛ le medeſime passiωni; per le quali lωrω prωpriɛtà possωnω le altrui cωnωſcere; ma a quelli, che sωnω di divɛrse spɛcie, nωn sωlamente nωn fu necessariω lωrω il parlare, ma in tuttω dannωſω gli sarɛbbe statω; nωn essɛndω alcunω amicabile cωmerziω tra essi. ɛ se mi fωsse ωppostω chel serpɛnte, che parlò a la prima fɛmina, ɛ l’aſina di Balaam habbianω parlatω; A questω rispωndω, che l’angelω, ne l’aſina, ɛt il diavωlω nel serpɛnte hannω tamente ωperatω, che essi animali mosserω gli organi lωrω, ɛ cωsì d’indi la vωce resultò distinta, cωme verω parlare’; nωn che quellω de l’aſina fωsse altrω, che raggiare, ɛ quella del serpɛnte’ altrω, che fischiare. Se alcunω poi argumentasse da quellω, che ωvidiω dice, nel quintω de la Mɛtamorphoſi, che le piche parlorωnω; dicω, che egli dice questω figuratamente, intendɛndω altrω; ma se si dicesse, che le piche al preſɛnte, ɛt altri ucɛlli parlanω, dicω, che egli è falsω, perciò, che tale attω non è parlare, ma è certa imitaziωne del suonω de la nostra vωce; o vero che si sforzanω de imitar

nωi in quanto sωniamo, ma nωn in quantω parliamω. Tal che se a quellω, che alcunω ɛxpressamente dicesse', anchωra la picha ridicesse, questω nωn sarɛbbe de nωn rappreʃentaziωne, over imitaziωne del suonω di quellω, che prima havesse dettω. ɛ cωsì appare, a l'homω sωlω ɛssere statω datω il parlare; ma per qual cagiωne essω gli fωsse necessariω, si sfωrzaremo briɛvemente trattare'.

Che fu necessario a l'homω il cωmɛrciω del parlare'.
CAP. III

Mωvɛndωsi adunque l'homω, nωn per istintω di natura, ma per ragiωne', ɛt essa ragiωne', o circa la separaziωne, o circa il giudiciω, o circa la ɛleziωne diversificandωsi in ciascunω, tal, che quaʃi niunω intɛnda l'altrω per le' sue' proprie' aziωni, o passiωni, come' fannω la bɛstie; nέ anche per speculaziωne l'unω può intrare ne l'altrω, cωme l'Angelω, sɛndω per la grωsseza, ɛt ωpacità del corpω mωrtale l'humana spɛcie da ciò ritenuta; fu adunque biʃognω, che vωlɛndω la gɛneraziωne humana fra sέ cωmunicare i suoi cωncɛtti, havesse qualche segnω sensuale, ɛ raziωnale; perciò, che devɛndω prɛndere una coʃa da la ragiωne, ɛ ne la ragiωne pωrtarla, biʃωgnava ɛssere raziωnale; ma nωn pωtɛndωsi alcuna coʃa di una ragiωne in un'altra pωrtare, senωn per il mɛçω del sensuale, fu biʃognω ɛssere sensuale; perciò, che sel fωsse sωlamente raziωnale, nωn pωtrɛbbe trappassare', se sωlω sensuale, nωn pωtrɛbbe prɛndere da la ragiωne, nέ ne la ragiωne depωrre. ɛ questo è segnω, che il subjettω, di che parliamω, è nobile; perciò, che in quantω suonω, egli è una coʃa sensuale: ɛt in quantω che secωndω la vωluntà di ciascunω significa qualche coʃa, egli è raziωnale.

A che homω fu prima datω il parlare, ɛ che disse prima, ɛt in che lingua.
CAP. IV

Manifɛstω è per le coʃe già dette, che a l'homω sωlω fu datω il parlare; Hora istimω, che appreɛssω debbiamω investigare, a chi homω fu prima datω il parlare, ɛ che coʃa prima disse, ɛ a chi parlò, ɛ dωve, ɛ quandω, ɛt ɛziandiω in che linguaggiω il primω suω parlare si sciolse. Secωndω che si lɛgge ne la prima parte del Gɛnɛʃis, ωve la sacratissima scrittura tratta del principiω del mωndω, si truova la fɛmina prima chɛ niun altrω haver parlatω; cioè la preʃωntuωʃissima ɛva; la quale al Diavωlω, che la ricercava, disse: [« Ci nutriamω de i frutti de i legni che sωnω nel Paradiʃω;] Diω ci ha cωmessω, che nωn mangiamω del fruttω del legnω, che è nel mɛçω del Paradiʃω, ɛ che nωn lω tωcchiamω; acciò, che per aventura nωn mωriamω ». Ma avɛgna, che in scrittω si truovi, la donna

haver primiɛramente parlatω, nωn di menω è ragiωnevωle coʃa, che crediamω, che l’homω fωsse quellω, che prima parlasse. Né coʃa incωnveniɛnte mi pare il pensare, che così ɛxcellɛnte acziωne de la generaziωne humana prima da l’homω, chɛ da la fɛmina prωcedesse; Ragiωnevωlmente adunque crediamω ad essω ɛsser statω datω primiɛramente’ il parlare da Diω subitω, che’ l’hɛbbe fωrmatω. Che vωce’ poi fωsse quella, che’ parlò prima, a ciascunω di sana mente può ɛssere’ in prωntω; ɛt iω nωn dubitω, che’ la fωsse’ quella, che’ è Diω, cioè, Eli. O verω per modω di interrωgaziωne’, o per modω di risposta. Absurda coʃa veramente’ pare, ɛ da la ragiωne aliɛna, che’ da l’homω fωsse nωminatω coʃa alcuna prima, chɛ Diω; cωnciò sia, che da essω, ɛt in essω fωsse fattω l’homω. ɛ sì cωme dωpω la prevaricaziωne de l’humana generaziωne, ciascunω ɛxordiω di parlare cωmincia da *hɛu*, cωsì è ragiωnevωle coʃa, che quellω, che fu davanti cωminciasse da allegreza; ɛ cωnciò sia, che niun gaudiω sia fuori di Diω; ma tuttω in Diω, ɛt essω Diω tuttω sia allegreza, cωnsequɛnte coʃa è, chel primω parlante dicesse primiɛramente, ‘Diω’. Quindi naʃce questω dubbiω; che’ havɛndω disωpra dettω, l’homω haver prima per via de risposta parlatω; se risposta fu, devette ɛssere’ a Diω, ɛ se a Diω, parrɛbbe, che Diω prima havesse parlatω, il che parrɛbbe cωntra quellω, che havemω dettω disωpra; al qual dubbiω rispωndemω; che bɛn può l’homω haver rispostω a Diω, che lω interrωgava, né per questω Diω haver parlatω di quella lωquɛla, che dicemω. Quale è cωlui, che dubiti, che tutte le coʃe, che sωnω, nωn si piɛghinω secωndω il vωler di Diω, da cui è fatta, gωvernata, ɛ cωnservata ciascuna coʃa? ɛ cωnciò sia, che l’aere a tante alteraziωni per cωmandamentω de la natura inferiωre si muova, la quale è ministra, ɛ fattura di Diω, di maniɛra, che fa risωnare i trωni, fulgurare il fuocω, gemere l’acqua, ɛ sparge le nevi, ɛ slancia la grandine, nωn si mωverà ɛgli per cωmandamentω di Diω a far risωnare alcune parole? le quali sianω distinte da cωlui, che magiωr coʃa distinsɛ? ɛ perché no? la ωnde, ɛt a questω, ɛt ad alcun’altre coʃe’ crediamω tale risposta bastare.

Dωve ɛt a cui prima l’homω habbia parlatω.

CAP. V

Giudicandω adunque (nωn sɛnza ragiωne tratta cωsì da le coʃe superiωri, cωme da le inferiωri) che l’homω drizasse il suω primω parlare primiɛramente a Diω; dicω, che ragiωnevωlmente essω primω parlante parlò subitω, che fu da la virtù animante inspiratω; perciò, che ne l’homω crediamo, che mωltω più coʃa humana sia l’ɛssere sentitω, chɛ il sentire, pur che egli sia sentitω, ɛ sɛnta cωme homω. Se adunque quel primω fabbrω di ogni perfeziωne principiω, ɛt amatωre, inspirandω il primω homω cωn ogni perfeziωne cωmpì, ragiωnevωle coʃa mi

pare, che questω perfettissimω animale nωn prima cωminciasse a sentire, chel fωsse sentitω. Se alcunω pωi dicesse cωntra le ωbiecziωni; Che nωn ɛra biʃognω, che l'homω parlasse, essɛndω egli sωlω; ɛ che Diω ogni nostrω secretω, sɛnza parole, ɛt anchω prima di nωi, diʃcɛrne. Hora (cωn quella riverɛnzia, la quale devemω uʃare ogni volta, che qualche coʃa de l'ɛtɛrna vωluntà giudichiamω) dicω; che avɛgna, che Diω sapesse, anzi antivedesse (che è una medeʃima coʃa quantω a Diω) il cωncɛttω del primω parlante sɛnza parlare, nωn di menω vωlse, che essω parlasse; acciò, che ne la explicaziωne di tantω dωnω, cωlui, che graziωʃamente glielω havea dωnatω, se ne glωriasse; ɛ perciò devemω credere, che da Diω prωcɛda, che ωrdinatω l'attω de i nostri affɛtti, se ne allegriamω. Quinci pωssiamω ritrωvare il luocω, nel quale fu mandata fuori la prima favella; perciò, che se fu animatω l'homω fuori del paradiʃω, diremω che fuori, se dentrω, diremω che dentrω fu il locω del suω primω parlare'.

Di che Idioma prima l'homω parlò.
CAP. VI

Hora perché i negozii humani si hannω ad ɛxercitare per mωlte, ɛ divɛrse lingue, tal, che mωlti per le parole nωn sωnω altrimente inteʃi da mωlti, chɛ se fusserω senza esse; però fia buonω investigare di quel parlare, del quale si crede haver uʃatω l'homω, che nacque sɛnza madre, ɛ sɛnza latte si nutrì, ɛ che né pupilare ɛtà vide, né adulta. In questa coʃa, sì cωme in altre mωlte, Piɛtra mala è amplissima città, ɛ patria de la maggiωr parte de i figliuoli di Adamω, però qualunque si ritruova ɛssere di cωsì dishωnɛsta ragiωne, che creda, che il luogω de la sua naziωne sia il più deliziωʃω, che si truovi sωttω il sωle, a cωstui parimente sarà licitω prepωrre il suω propriω vulgare, cioè la sua matɛrna lωcuziωne, a tutti gli altri, ɛ cωnseguɛntemente credere essa ɛssere stata quella di Adamω. Ma nωi, a cui il mωndω è patria, sì cωme a peʃci il mare, quantunque habbiamω bevutω l'acqua d'Arnω avanti, che havessemω dɛnti, ɛ che amiamω tantω Fiωrɛnza, che per haverla amata patiamω injustω ɛxiliω, nωn di menω le spalle del nostrω giudiciω più a la ragiωne, chɛ al sensω appωggiamω; ɛ ben, che secωndω il piacer nostrω, o verω secωndω la quiɛte de la nostra sensualità, nωn sia in tɛrra locω più amɛnω di Fiωrɛnza; pure rivωlgɛndω i vωlumi de i pωɛti, ɛ de gli altri scrittωri, ne i quali il mωndω universalmente, ɛ particularmente si descrive, ɛ discωrrɛndω fra nωi i varii siti de i luoghi del mωndω, ɛ le habitudini lωrω tra l'unω, ɛ l'altrω polω, ɛ 'l circulω ɛquatωre, fermamente cωmprɛndω, ɛ credω mωlte regiωni, ɛ città ɛssere più nobili, ɛ deliziωʃe, chɛ Tωscana, ɛ Fiωrɛnza, ωve sωn natω, ɛ di cui sωn cittadinω; ɛ mωlte naziωni, ɛ mωlte gɛnti uʃare più dilettevωle, ɛ più utile sermωne, chɛ gli Italiani. Ritωrnandω adunque

al prωpostω; dicω, che una cεrta fωrma di parlare fu creata da Diω insiεme cωn l'anima prima, ε dico 'fωrma', quantω a i vωcabωli de le coʃe, [ε quantω alla cωnstruziωne de i vωcabωli], ε quantω al proferir de le cωnstruziωni, la quale fωrma veramente ogni parlante lingua uʃerεbbe, se per cωlpa de la prωʃunziωne humana nωn fωsse stata dissipata; cωme disωttω si mωstrerà; di questa fωrma di parlare parlò Adamω, ε tutti i suoi posteri, finω a la εdificazione de la tωrre di Babεl, la quale si intεrpreta la tωrre de la cωnfuʃiωne. Questa fωrma di lωcuziωne hannω hereditatω i figliuoli di Hεbεr, i quali da lui furωnω detti Hεbrεi; a cui sωli dωpω la cωnfuʃiωne rimaʃe acciò, che il nostrω Redemptωre, il quale dωveva naʃcere di lωrω, uʃasse, secωndω la humanità, de la lingua de la grazia, ε nωn di quella de la cωnfuʃiωne; Fu adunque lω Hεbraicω Idioma quellω, che fu fabricatω da le labra del primω parlante.

De le diviʃiωni del parlare in più lingue.

CAP. VII

Ahi cωme gravemente' mi vergognω di rinωvare al preʃεnte' la ignωminia de la generaziωne humana; ma perciò, che nωn pωssiamω laʃciar di passare per essa, se bεn la faccia divεnta rωssa, ε l'animω la fugge, nωn starò di narrarla; O nostra natura sempre prona a i peccati, o da principiω, ε che mai nωn finiʃce, piεna de nequizia, nωn εra statω assai per la tua cωrruttεlla, che per lω primω fallω fωsti cacciata, ε stesti in bandω de' la patria de le delicie? nωn εra assai, che' per la universale luxuria, ε crudeltà de' la tua famiglia, tuttω quellω, che' εra di te', fuor chε una caʃa sωla, fusse dal diluviω sωmmersω? ε per il male, che tu havevi cωmessω, gli animali del Ciεlω, ε de la tεrra, fussenω già stati puniti? cεrtω assai sarεbbe statω; ma cωme' prωverbialmente' si suol dire, «Nωn andrai a cavallω anzi la terza»; ε tu miʃera vωlesti miʃeramente andare a cavallω. εccω lettωre, che l'homω, o verω scωrdatω, o verω nωn curandω de le prime battiture, ε rivωlgεndω gli occhi da le' sfεrze, che εranω rimaʃe, venne la tεrza volta a le botte, per la ʃciocca sua, ε supεrba prωʃunziωne; preʃunse adunque dnel suω cuore lω incurabile homω sωttω persuaʃiωne di Gigante di superare cωn l'arte sua nωn sωlamente la natura, ma anchωra essω naturante, il quale è Diω; ε cωminciò ad εdificare una tωrre in Sεnnaar, la quale poi fu detta Babεl, cioè cωnfuʃiωne', per la quale sperava di aʃcεndere al ciεlω, havεndω intenziωne il sciocchω nωn sωlamente di aguagliare, ma di avanzare il suω fattωre; O clemεnzia sεnza miʃura del celεste Imperiω; qual padre sωster[r]εbbe tanti insulti dal figliuolω; Hora inalzandωsi, nωn cωn inimica sferza, ma cωn patεrna, εt a battiture assuεta, il ribellante figliuolω cωn piatωʃa, ε memωrabile cωrreziωne castegò. εra quaʃi tutta la generaziωne humana a questa opera iniqua cωncωrsa,

parte cωmandava, parte ɛranω architɛcti, parte facevanω muri, parte i piωmbavanω, parte tiravanω le corde, parte cavavanω sassi, parte per tɛrra, parte per mare li cωnducevanω; ɛ cωsì divɛrse parti in divɛrse altre opere s'affaticavanω, quandω furωnω dal ciɛlω di tanta cωnfuʃiωne percossi, che dωve tutti cωn una istessa lωquɛla sɛrvivanω a l'opera, diversificandωsi in mωlte lωquɛle da essa cessavanω, nɛ́ mai a quel medeʃimω cωmɛrciω cωnvenivanω; ɛ a quelli sωli, che in una coʃa cωnvenivanω, una istessa lωquɛla attualmente rimaʃe; cωme è a tutti gli architetti, una, a tutti i cωndutωri di sassi, una, a tutti i preparatωri di quegli, una; ɛ cωsì advenne di tutti gli operanti; tal, che di quanti varii ɛxercizii ɛranω in quell'opera, di tanti varii linguaggi fu la generaziωne' humana disiunta. ɛ quantω era più ɛxcellɛnte l'artificiω di ciascunω, tantω era più grωssω, ɛ barbarω il lωrω parlare'. Quelli pωʃcia, a li quali il sacratω Idioma rimaʃe, nɛ́ eranω preʃɛnti, nɛ́ lωdavanω lω ɛxerciziω lωrω; anzi gravemente biaʃimandωlω, si ridevanω de' la ʃciωccheza de' li operanti; ma questi furωnω una minima parte' di quelli, quantω al numerω, ɛ furωnω sì cωm'iω cωmprɛndω del sɛme di Sɛm, il quale fu il terzω figliuolω di Nωè, da cui nacque' il popωlω di Israɛl, il quale uʃò de la antiquissima lωcuziωne finω a la sua dispersiωne'.

Sωttωdiviʃiωne del parlare per il mωndω, ɛ specialmente in ɛuropa.

CAP. VIII

Per la detta precedɛnte cωnfuʃiωne di lingue, nωn leggiɛramente giudichiamω, che alhωra primieramente gli homini furωnω sparsi per tutti i clima del mωndω, ɛ per tutte le regiωni, ɛt anguli di essω; ɛ cωnciò sia, che la principale radice de la prωpagaziωne humana, sia ne le parti ωrientali piantata, ɛ d'indi da l'unω, ɛ l'altrω latω, per palmiti variamente diffuʃi, fu la prωpagaziωne nostra disteʃa, ɛ finalmente infinω a l'ωccidɛnte prωdωtta, la ωnde primiɛramente le gωle raziωnali gustωrωnω, o tutti, o almen parte dei fiumi di tutta ɛuropa; ma o fusserω fωrestiɛri questi, che alhωra primieramente vennerω, o pur nati prima in ɛuropa, ritωrnasserω ad essa; questi cωtali pωrtorωnω tre idiomi sɛcω; ɛ parte di lωrω hɛbbenω in sorte la regiωne Meridiωnale di ɛuropa, parte la Settentriωnale, ɛt i tɛrzi, i quali al preʃɛnte chiamiamω Grɛci, parte de l'Asia, ɛ parte de la ɛuropa ωccuporωnω; poʃcia da unω istessω Idioma da la immunda cωnfuʃiωne ricevutω, nacquerω divɛrsi vωlgari, cωme diʃωttω dimωstreremω; perciò, che tuttω quel trattω, che da la fωce del Danubiω, o verω da la palude Meotide finω a le fine ωccidentali, le quali da i cωnfini di Inghɛltɛrra, Italia, ɛ Franza, ɛ da l'ωcɛanω sωnω terminate, tenne unω sωlω Idioma; avɛgna, che' poi per Schiavωni, Ungari, Tedeschi, Saxωni, Ingleʃi, ɛt altre molte naziωni fωsse in divɛrsi vωlgari derivatω, remanɛndω questω sωlω

per segnω, che’ havesserω un medeſimω principiω, che’ quaſi tutti i predetti vωlεndω affirmare’ dicωnω jò. Cωminciandω pωi dal tεrmine di questω Idioma, cioè da le’ fine’ de’ gli Ungari vεrsω ωriεnte’, un altro Idioma tuttω quel trattω ωccupò; quel poi, che’ da questi in qua si chiamaεuropa, ε più ωltra si stεnde’, o verω tuttω quellω de’ la εuropa, che’ rεsta, tεnne’ un tεrzω Idiωma; avεgna, che al preſεnte’ tripartitω si veggia; perciò, che’ vωlεndω affirmare’, altri dicωnω *oc*, altri *oì*, εt altri *sì*, cioè Spagnuoli, Franceſi, εt Italiani. Il segnω adunque che i tre vωlgari di cωstωrω prωcedesserω da unω istessω Idioma è in prωntω; per ciò che mωlte’ coſe chiamanω per i medeſimi vωcabωli, cωme è Diω, Ciεlω, Amωre, Mare, Terra, ε vive, muore, ama, εt altri mωlti. Di questi adunque de la meridiωnale εuropa, quelli, che prωferiscωnω *oc*, tεngωnω la parte’ ωccidentale, che cωmincia da i cωnfini de Genωveſi; Quelli poi, che dicωnω *sì*, tεngωnω da i predetti cωnfini la parte ωrientale, cioè finω a quel prωmωntoriω d’Italia, dal quale cωmincia il senω del mare Adriaticω, ε la Sicilia; Ma quelli, che affermanω cωn *oì*, quaſi sωnω settentriωnali a rispettω di questi; perciò, che da l’ωriεnte, ε dal Settentriωne, hannω gli Alemani, dal Pωnente sωnω serrati dal mare Ingleſe, ε da i mωnti di Aragωna terminati, dal mεço dì poi sωnω chiuſi da Prωuεnzali, ε da la flexiωne de lω Appenninω.

De le tre variεtà del parlare, ε cωme cωl tεmpω il medeſimω parlare si muta.
CAP. IX

A nωi hora è biſognω pωrre a pericωlω la ragiωne, che havemω, vωlεndω ricercare di quelle coſe, ne le quali da niuna autωrità siamω ajutati, cioè vωlεndω dire de la variaziωne, che intervenne al parlare, che da principiω εra il medeſimω; ma cωnciò sia, che per camini noti più tostω, ε più sicuramente si vada; però sωlamente per questω nostrω Idioma andaremo, ε gli altri laſciεremω da parte; cωnciò sia, che quellω, che ne l’unω è ragiωnevωle, pare che eziandiω habbia ad εssere cauſa ne gli altri.

è adunque lω Idioma, de lω quale trattiamω (cωme ho dettω disωpra) in tre parti diviſω; perciò, che alcuni dicωnω *oc*, altri *sì*, εt altri *oì*. ε che questω dal principiω de la cωnfuſiωne fωsse unω medeſimω (il che primiεramente prωvar si deve) appare; perciò, che si cωnvengωnω in mωlti vωcabuli, cωme gli εxcellεnti Dωttωri dimωstranω; la quale cωnveniεnzia repugna a la cωnfuſiωne, che fu per il delittω ne la εdificaziωne di Babel. I dωttωri adunque di tutte tre queste lingue, in mωlte coſe cωnvεngωnω, ε massimamente in questω vωcabulω Amωr. Gerardω di Brunel. *Suriſentis fez les armes Puεr encuser amωr*. Il Re di Navara.

*De fin amωr suvent sen, ε bent*è. M. Guidω Guinizεli. *Né fu amωr, prima chε gentil cuore’*, *Né cuor gentil, pria chε d’amωr natura*.

Investighiamω adunque, perché εgli in tre parti sia principalmente variatω, ε perché ciascuna di queste variaziωni in sε stessa si varie; cωme’ è, la dεstra parte d’Italia ha divεrsω parlare da quellω de la sinistra: cioè altramente parlanω i Padωani, εt altramente i Piʃani; ε investighiamω, perché quelli, che habitanω più vicini, sianω differεnti nel parlare, cωme è i Milaneʃi, ε Veroneʃi, Rωmani, ε Fiωrentini; ε anchωra perché siano differεnti quelli, che si cωnvεngωnω sωttω unω istessω nωme di gεnte, cωme Napωletani, ε Gaetani; Ravegnani, ε Faentini; ε quel, che è più meravigliωʃω, cerchiamω, perché nωn si cωnvenganω in parlare quelli, che in una medeʃima città dimωranω; cωme sωnω i Bωlωgneʃi del bωrgω di san Felice, εt i Bωlωgneʃi de la strada maggiωre’. Tutte queste differεnze adunque, ε variεtà di sermωne, che advεngωnω, cωn una istessa ragiωne sarannω manifεste. Dicω adunque, che niunω εffεttω avanza la sua cagiωne, in quantω εffεttω; perché niuna coʃa può fare, ciò ch’ella nωn è; εssεndω adunque ωgni nostra lωquela (excεttω quella, che fu da Diω insiεme cωn l’homω creata) a nostrω bεnεplacitω raccωncia, dωpω quella cωnfuʃiωne, la quale niεnte altrω fu, chε una ωbliviωne de la lωquεla prima, εt εssεndω l’homω instabilissimω, ε variabilissimω animale, la nostra lωcuziωne, né durabile, né cωntinua può εssere; ma cωme le altre coʃe, che sωnω nostre (cωme sωnω cωstumi εt habiti) si mutanω, cωsì questa, secωndω le distanzie dei luoghi, ε dei tεmpi, è biʃognω di variarsi; però non è da dubitare, che nel modω, che havemω dettω, cioè, che cωn la distanzia del tεmpω, il parlare nωn si varii; anzi è fermamente da tenere; perciò, che se nωi vωgliamω sωttilmente investigare le altre opere nostre, le trωveremω mωltω più differεnti da gli antiquissimi nostri cittadini, chε da gli altri de la nostra εtà quantunque ci sianω mωltω lωntani; il perché audacemente affermω, che se gli antiquissimi Paveʃi hora risuʃcitasserω, parlerεbberω di divεrsω parlare di quellω, che hora parlanω in Pavia; né altrimente questω, ch’iω dicω, ci paja meravigliωʃω, che ci parrεbbe a vedere un giωvane creʃciutω, il quale non havessimω vedutω creʃcere. Perciò, che le coʃe, chε a pocω a pocω si movenω, il motω lωrω è da nωi pocω cωnωʃciutω, ε quantω la variaziωne de la coʃa ricerca più tεmpω ad εssere cωnωʃciuta, tantω essa coʃa è da nωi più stabile εxistimata. Adunque nωn si admiriamω se i discωrsi de gli homini, che sωnω pocω da le bεstie differεnti, pensanω, che una istessa città habbia sεmpre il medeʃimω parlare uʃatω; cωnciò sia, che la variaziωne del parlare di essa città, nωn sεnza lωnghissima successiωne di tεmpω a pocω a pocω sia divenuta; ε sia la vita de gli homini di sua natura brevissima; se adunque il sermωne ne la istessa gεnte (cωme è dettω) successivamente cωl tεmpω si varia, né può per alcun modω firmarse, è

necessariω, che il parlare di cωlωrω, che lωntani, ε separati dimωranω, sia variamente variatω; sì cωme sωnω anchωra variamente variati i cωstumi, εt habiti lωrω, i quali, né da natura, né da cωnsorziω humanω sωnω firmati; ma a bεneplacitω, ε secωndω la cωnveniεntia de i luoghi naʃciuti. Quinci si mosserω gli inventωri de l'arte Grammatica, la quale Grammatica nωn è altrω, chε una inalterabile cωnfωrmità di parlare, in divεrsi tεmpi, ε luoghi; questa εssεndω di cωmun cωnsεnsω di mωlte gεnti regulata, nωn par suggεtta al singulare arbitriω di niunω, ε cωnseguεntemente nωn può εssεre variabile. Questa adunque trωvorωnω acciò, che per la variatiωn del parlare, il quale per singulare arbitriω si muove, nωn ci fωsserω o in tuttω tωlte, o imperfεttamente date le autωrità, εt i fatti de gli antiqui, ε di cωlωrω, da i quali la diversità de i luoghi ci fa εssere diviʃi.

De la variεtà del parlare in Italia da la destra, ε sinistra parte de l'Appenninω.
CAP. X

Hora uʃcendω in tre parti diviʃω (cωme disωpra è dettω) il nostrω parlare, ne la cωmparaziωne di se stessω, secωndω che egli è tripartitω, cωn tanta timidità lω andiamω pωnderandω; che né questa parte, né quella, né quell'altra habbiamω ardimentω di prepωrre, senωn in quellω *sic*, che i Grammatici si truovanω haver preʃω per advεrbiω di affirmare; la qual coʃa pare, che dia qualche più di autωrità a lj' Italiani, i quali dicωnω *sì*. Veramente ciascuna di queste tre parti, cωn largω testimoniω si diffεnde. La lingua di *oì*, allega per sé, che per lω suω più facile, ε più dilettevωle vωlgare, tuttω quellω, che è statω traduttω, o verω ritrωvatω in proʃa vωlgare è suω; cioè la Bibia, i fatti de i Trωiani, ε de i Rωmani, le bellissime favωle del Re Artù, ε mωlte altre historie, ε dωttrine'. L'altra poi argumenta per sé, cioè la lingua di *oc*; ε dice; che i vωlgari εlωquεnti, scrisserω i primi pωεmi in essa, sì cωme in lingua più perfεtta, ε più dωlce; cωme fu Piεrω di Alvεrnia, εt altri mωltω antiqui Dωttωri. La tεrza poi, che è de lj'Italiani, afferma per dui privilegii εsser superiωre; il primω è, che quelli, che più dωlcemente, ε più sωttilmente hanno scritti pωεmi, sωnω stati i suoi dωmεstici, ε familjari; cioè Cinω da Pistωja, ε lω Amicω suω. Il secωndω è, che pare, che più s'accostinω a la Grammtica, la quale è cωmune. E questω a cωlωrω, che voljωnω cωn ragiωne cωnsiderare, par gravissimω argumentω. Ma nωi, laʃciandω da parte il giudiciω di questω, ε rivωlgεndω il trattatω nostrω al vωlgare' Italianω, si sfωrzeremω di dire le variaziωni ricevute in essω; ε quelle' fra sé cωmpararemω. Dicemω adunque la Italia εssere primamente in due parti

diviſa, cioè ne la dεstra, ε ne la sinistra; ε se alcunω dimandasse quale è la linea, che questa diparte; briεvemente rispωndω, εssere il Giωgω de l'Appenninω; il quale, cωme un cωlmω di fistula, di qua, ε di là a divεrse grωnde piove, ε l'acque di qua, ε di là per lunghi embrici a diversi liti distillanω: cωme Lucanω nel secωndω descrive; εt il dextrω latω ha il mar Tyrrhεnω per grωndatωiω, il sinistrω v'ha lω Adriaticω. Del dεstrω latω poi sωnω regiωni, la Pulja, ma nωn tutta, Rωma, il Ducatω, Tωscana, la Marca di Gεnωva; Del sinistrω sωnω parte de la Pulja, la Marca d'Ancωna, la Rωmagna, la Lωmbardia, la Marca Trivigiana cωn Venεzia. Il Friuli veramente, ε l'Istria nωn possωnω εssere senωn de la parte sinistra d'Italia; ε le Iſωle del mar Tyrrhεnω, cioè Sicilia, ε Sardigna, nωn sωnω senωn de la dεstra: o veramente sωnω da εssere a la dεstra parte d'Italia accωmpagnate. In ciascunω adunque di questi dui lati d'Italia, εt in quelle parti, che si accωmpagnanω ad essi, le lingue de lj homini sωnω varie; cioè la lingua de i Siciliani cωi Pulјeſi, ε quella de i Pulјeſi cωi Rωmani, ε de i Rωmani cωi Spωletani, ε di questi cωi Tωscani, ε de i Tωscani cωi Genωveſi, ε de i Genωveſi cωi Sardi. E similmente quella dei Calavresi cωn lj'Ancωnitani, ε di cωstωrω cωi Rωmagnuoli, ε de i Rωmagnuoli cωi Lωmbardi, ε de i Lωmbardi cωi Trivigiani ε' Veneziani, ε di questi cωi Furlani, ε di essi cωn lji Istriani [de la qual coſa pensiamω nessun Italianω dissentire cωn nωi]; ne la qual coſa dicω, che la Italia sωla appare in xiiij vωlgari εssere variata; ciascunω de i quali anchωra in sε stessω si varia; cωme' in Tωscana, i Seneſi, ε lj' Aretini; in Lωmbardia, i Ferrareſi, ε Piacentini; ε parimente in una istessa città trωviamω εssere qualche variaziωne' di parlare, cωme nel capitωlω disωpra habbiamω dettω. Il perché se vωremω calculare le prime, le secωnde, ε le sωttωsecωnde variaziωni del vωlgare d'Italia, adverrà, che in questω minimω cantωne del mωndω, si venirà nωn sωlamente a mille variaziωni di lωquεla, ma anchωra a mωltω più.

Si dimωstra, che alcuni in Italia hannω bruttω, εt inωrnatω parlare.
CAP. XI

Essεndω il vωlgare Italianω per mωlte variεtà dissωnante, investighiamω la più bεlla, εt illustre lωquεla di Italia; εt acciò, che a la nostra investigaziωne pωssiamω havere un picciωlω calle, gettiamω prima fuori de la selva lj' arbωri attraversati, ε le spine. Sì cωme adunque i Rωmani si stimanω di dωver εssere a tutti preposti, cωsì in questa εradicaziωne', o verω εxtirpaziωne nωn immeritatamente a lj' altri li prepωrremω; prωtestandω essi in niuna ragiωne de la vωlgare εlωquεnzia εssere da tωccare. Dicemω adunque, il vωlgare de i Rωmani, o per dir mεljω, il suω tristω parlare εssere il più bruttω di tutti i

vωlgari Italiani; ε nωn è maravilja, sɛndω ne i cωstumi, ε ne le defωrmità de lj' habiti lωrω sωpra tutti puzωlɛnti; ɛssi dicωnω, *Meçure quintω dici*. Dωpω questi caviamω quelli de la Marca d'Ancωna, i quali dicωnω, *Chignamente scate' ʃciate*, cωn i quali mandiamω via i Spωletani; ε nωn è da preterire, che in vitupɛriω di queste tre gɛnti sωnω state mωlte canzωni cωmposte, tra le quali ne vidi una drittamente' ε perfettamente' legata, la quale un cɛrtω Fiωrentinω, nωminatω il Castra, haveva cωmpostω, ε cωminciava: *Una ferina va scωpai da Cascωli, Cita cita sen gia grande aina*.

Dωpω questi i Melaneʃi, ε i Bergamaschi, ɛt i lωrω vicini gettian via; in vitupɛriω de i quali mi ricordω alcunω haver cantatω: *Inte l'hωra del vesperziω, Fu del mes d'ωckiωver*.

Dωpω questi crivelliamω lj Aquilejiɛnsi, ε lj Istriani, i quali cωn crudɛli accɛnti dicωnω, *Ces fas tu*; ε cωn questi mandian via tutte le mωntanine ε villanesche lωquɛle; le quali di brutteza di accɛnti sωnω sɛmpre dissωnanti da i cittadini, che stannω in mɛçω le città, cωme i Casentini, ε Prateʃi. I Sardi anchωra, i quali nωn sωnω d'Italia, ma a la Italia accωmpagnati, gettian via; perché questi sωli ci paiωnω ɛssere sɛnza propriω vulgare, ɛt imitanω la Grammatica, cωme fannω le Simie lj huomini; perché dicωnω, *Domus nova, ɛt dominus meus*.

De lω Idioma Sicilianω, ε Puljese.
CAP. XII

De i crivellati (per modω di dire) vulgari d'Italia, facɛndω cωmparatiωne tra quelli, che nel crivellω sωnω rimaʃi, briɛvemente ʃcelgiamω il più hωnωrevωle di ɛssi. ε primamente ɛxaminiamω lω ingegnω circa il Sicilianω, perciò, che pare, che il vωlgare Sicilianω habbia assuntω la fama sωpra lj altri; cωnciò sia, che tutti i pωɛmi, che fannω lj' Italiani, si kiaminω in Sicilianω; ε cωnciò sia, che trωviamω mωlti dωttωri di cωstà haver gravemente cantatω; cωme in quelle canzωni, *Anchωr che l'aigua per lω focω lassi*, ɛt *Amωr, che lωngamente m'hai menatω*.

Ma questa fama de la tɛrra di Sicilia, se drittamente risguardiamω, appare, che sωlamente per ωpprobriω de' Principi Italiani sia rimaʃa; i quali nωn cωn modω hɛroicω, ma cωn plebeω seguenω la supɛrbia; Ma quelli Illustri hɛroi Federicω Cɛʃare, et el bɛn natω suω figliuolω Manfrɛdi, dimωstrandω la nωbiltà, ε dritteza de la sua fωrma, mentre che la fωrtuna gli fu favωrevωle, seguirωnω le coʃe humane, ε le bestiali sdegnorωnω: Il perché cωlωrω, che ɛranω di altω cuore, ε di grazie dωttati, si sfωrzavanω di adherirsi a la maestà de sì gran

Principi; tal che in quel tεmpω tuttω quellω, che gli εxcellenti Italiani cωmpωnevanω ne’ la cωrte di sì gran Re primanente uʃciva. ε perché il lωrω sεggiω regale εra in Sicilia, è advenutω, che tuttω quellω, che i nostri precessωri cωmpωserω in vulgare, si kiama Sicilianω; il che ritenemω anchωra nωi; εt i posteri nostri nωn lω pωtrannω mutare. *Racha, Racha*. Che suona hora la trωmba de l’ultimω Federicω? che, il sωnaljω de ‘l secωndω Carlω? che, i corni di Giωvanni, ε di Azω Marcheʃi pωtεnti? che le tibie de lj altri Magnati? senωn venite carnefici, venite altriplici, venite settatωri di avarizia. Ma mεljω è tωrnare al prωpoʃitω, che parlare indarnω. Hor dicemω, che se vωljamω piljare il vωlgare Sicilianω, cioè quellω, che viεn da i mediocri paeʃani, da la bωcca de i quali è da cavare il giudiziω, appare, che ‘l nωn sia degnω di εssere prepostω a lj altri; perciò, chel nωn si prωferiʃce sεnza qualche tεmpω, cωme è, in, *Tragemi deste fωcωra se t’εste a bωlωntate*. Se questω poi nωn vωljamω piljare, ma quellω, che εʃce de la bωcca de i principali Siciliani, cωme ne le preallegate Canzωni si può vedere, nωn è in nulla differεnte da quellω, che è laudabilissimω, cωme disωttω dimωstreremω. I Puljeʃi poi, o verω per la accerbità lωrω, o verω per la prωpinquità de i suoi vicini [che sωnω Rωmani e Marchigiani] fannω brutti barbarismi. ε dicωnω, *Vωlzera, chε kiangesse lω quatrarω*. Ma quantunque cωmunemente i paeʃani Puljeʃi parlinω bruttamente, alcuni però εxcellenti tra lωrω hannω pωlitamente parlatω, ε pωstω ne le lωro Canzωni vωcabωli mωltω cωrtigiani, cωme manifestamente appare a chi i lωrω scritti cωnsidera, cωme è; *Madonna dir vi voljω*, ε, *Per finω amωre vò sì liεtamente’*.

Il perché a quelli, che nωteranno ciò, che s’è dettω disωpra, dεe εssere manifεstω, che né il Sicilianω, né il Puljεʃe è quel vωlgare, che in Italia è bellissimω; cωnciò sia, che habbiamω mωstratω, che lj εlωquεnti nativi di quel paeʃe sianω da essω partiti.

De lω Idioma de i Tωscani, ε Genωveʃi.

CAP. XIII

Dωpω questi vegniamω a li Tωscani, i quali per la lωrω pazia insensati, pare, che arrωgantemente s’attribuiscanω il titωlω del vulgare Illustre; εt in questω nωn sωlamente la ωpiniωne de i plebεi impazisse; ma ritruovω mωlti huomini famωʃi haverla havuta; cωme fu Guittωne d’Arezω il quale nωn si diede mai al vωlgare Cωrtigianω, Bωnagiunta da Luca, Gallω Piʃanω, Minω Mωcatω Seneʃe, Brunettω Fiωrentinω, i detti de i quali, se si harà tempω di εxaminarli, nωn Cωrtigiani, ma proprii de le lωrω cittadi εssere si ritrωverannω. Ma cωnciò sia,

che i Tωscani sianω più de lj altri in questa ɛbbriɛtà furibωndi, ci pare coʃa utile, ɛ degna torre in qualche coʃa la pωmpa a ciascunω de i vωlgari de le città di Tωscana. I Fiωrentini parlanω, ɛ dicωnω: *Manichiamω introque nωn facciamω altrω.* I Piʃani, *Bɛne andonnω li fanti di Fiωrɛnza per Piʃa.* I Lucheʃi, *Fò vωtω a Diω, che in gassaria ɛje lω cωmunω di Luca.* I Seneʃi, *ωnche rinegata havessi iω Siɛna.* Gli Arɛtini, *Votu venire ωvɛlle.* De Perugia, Orbiɛttω, Vitɛrbω, ɛ città Castellana, per la vicinità, che hannω cωn Rωmani, ɛ Spωletani, nωn intɛndω dir nulla. Ma cωme che quaʃi tutti i Tωscani sianω nel lωrω bruttω parlare ωttuʃi, nωn di menω ho vedutω alcuni haver cωnωʃciutω la ɛxcellenzia del vulgare, cioè Guidω, Lapω, ɛ un altrω, Fiωrentini, ɛ Cinω Pistωjeʃe, il quale al preʃɛnte indegnamente pωspωnemω, nωn indegnamente cωnstretti. Adunque se ɛxamineremo le lωquɛle Tωscane, ɛ cωnsidereremω cωme li homini mωltω hωnωrati si sianω da ɛsse lωrω prωprie partiti, nωn resta in dubbiω, che il vulgare, che nωi cerchiamω, sia altrω, chɛ quellω, che hannω i popωli di Tωscana. Se alcunω poi nωn pensasse, che quellω, che nωi affermiamω de i Tωscani, sia da affirmare de i Genωveʃi, questω sωlω cωstui cωnsideri, che se i Gɛnωveʃi per dimenticanza perdessenω il z, lettera, biʃognerɛbbe lωrω, over ɛssere tωtalmente muti, over trovare una nuova lωcuziωne, perciò, che il z è la maggiωr parte de il lωrω parlare, la qual lettera nωn si può senωn cωn mωlta asperità prωferire'.

De lω Idioma di Rωmagna, ɛ di alcuni Transpadani.
CAP. XIV

Passiamω hora le frωndute spalle de l'Appenninω, ɛt investighiamω tutta la sinistra parte de Italia, cωminciandω, cωme fare sωlemω, a levante. Intrandω adunque ne la Rωmagna, dicemω, che in Italia habbiamω ritrovati dui vωlgari, l'unω a l'altrω cωn cɛrti cωnvenevωli cωntrarii ωppostω, de li quali unω tantω feminile ci pare per la mωlizia de i vωcabuli, ɛ de la prωnunzia, che un homω (anchωra che virilmente parli) è tenutω fɛmina; questω vωlgare hannω tutti i Rωmagnuoli, ɛ specialmente i Fωrliveʃi, la Città de i quali, avɛgna che nωvissima sia, nωn di menω pare ɛsser posta nel mɛçω di tutta la prωvinzia; Questi affermandω dicωnω *deuʃci*, ɛt facɛndω careze soljωnω dire, *oclω mɛω*, ɛ *cωrada mɛa*. Bɛne habbiamω inteʃω, che alcuni di cωstωrω ne i pωɛmi lωrω si sωnω partiti dal suω propriω parlare, cioè Thωmaʃω, ɛt Ugωlinω Bucciωla Faentini. L'altrω de i dui parlari, che havemω dettω, è talmente di vωcabωli, ɛt accɛnti hirsutω ɛt ispidω, che per la sua rωça asperità, nωn sωlamente discωnza una donna, che parli, ma anchωra fa dubitare, s'ella è homω. Questω tale hannω

tutti quelli, che dicωnω *manara*, cioè, Bressani, Verωneʃi, ε Vicentini, εt anchω i Padωani, i quali in tutti i participii in *tus*, ε denωminativi in *tas*, fannω brutte syncωpe, cωme è mεrcò, ε bωntè; cωn questi pωnemω εziandiω i Trivigiani, i quali al modω de i Bressani, ε de i suoi vicini, prωferiscωnω lω v, cωnsωnante, per f, remωvεndω l'ultima syllaba; cωme è *nòf*, per nove; *vif*, per vivω; Il che veramente è barbarissimω, ε riprωvianlω. I Veneziani anchωra nωn sarannω degni de l'hωnωre de lω investigatω vωlgare, ε se alcun de lωrω spintω da εrrωre in questω vaneggiasse, ricordisi se mai disse; *per le plage di Diω tu nωn venras*; tra i quali habbiamω vedutω unω, che si è sfωrzatω partire dal suω matεrnω parlare, ε ridursi al vωlgare Cωrtigianω, ε questω fu Brandinω Padωanω. La ωnde tutti quelli del preʃεnte capitωlω cωmparεndω a la sentεnzia, diterminiamω, che né il Rωmagnuolω, né il suω cωntrariω, cωme si è dettω, né il Venezianω sa quellω Illustre vωlgare, che cerchiamω.

Fa gran discussiωne del parlare Bωlωgneʃe.
CAP. XV

Hora si sfωrzeremω, per εxpedirʃi, a cercare quellω, che de la Italica sylva ci rεsta. Dicemω adunque, che forse nωn hannω havuta mala ωpiniωne' cωlωrω, che affermanω, che i Bωlωgneʃi cωn mωltω bεlla lωquεla ragiωnanω; cωnciò sia, che da lj Imωleʃi, Ferrareʃi, ε Mωdeneʃi, qualche coʃa al lωrω propriω parlare aggiunganω, che tutti sì cωme havemω mωstratω, piglianω da i lωrω vicini, cωme Sωrdellω dimωstra la ʃua Mantωa, che cωn Cremωna, Bressa, ε Verωna cωnfina; Il qual homω fu tantω in εlωquεnzia, che nωn sωlamente ne i pωεmi, ma in ciascun modω, che parlasse, il vωlgare de la sua patria abandωnò. Piljanω anchωra i prefati cittadini la leggereza, ε la mωlizie da lj Imωleʃi ε da i Ferrareʃi, ε Mωdeneʃi una cεrta lωquacità, la quale è propria de i Lωmbardi; Questa per la mescωlanza de i Lωngωbardi fωrestieri crediamω εssere rimaʃa ne lj homini di quei paeʃi; ε questa è la ragiωne, per la quale nωn ritrωviamω, che niunω, né Ferrareʃe, né Mωdeneʃe, né Regianω, sia statω pωεta; perciò, che assuefatti a la propria lωquacità, nωn possωnω per alcun modω sεnza qualche accerbità al vωlgare Cωrtigianω venire; il che mωltω maggiωrmente de i Parmigiani è da pensare, i quali dicωnω *mωntω* per *mωltω*. Se adunque i Bωlωgneʃi, da l'una, ε da l'altra parte piljanω, cωme è dettω, ragiωnevωle coʃa ci pare, che il lωrω parlare per la mescωlanza de lj ωppoʃiti rimanga di laudabile suavità tempεratω. Il che per giudiciω nostrω sεnza dubbiω εssere crediamω. Verω è, che se quelli, che prepongωnω il vulgare sermωne de i Bωlωgneʃi, nel cωmpararli, essi hanno cωnsideraziωne sωlamente a i vωlgari de le città de Italia, vωlentiεri si

cωncωrdiamω cωn lωrω; ma se stimanω simplicemente il vωlgare Bωlωgneʃe εssere da preferire, siamω da εssi differεnti, ε discordi;erciò, che elji nωn è quellω, che nωi kiamiamω Cωrtigianω, εt Illustre; che s'el fωsse quellω, il Maximω Guidω Guinicεlli, Guidω Ghisliεrω, Fabriziω, εt Hωnεstω, εt altri pωεti, nωn sarianω mai partiti da essω; perciò, che furωnω Dωttωri Illustri, ε di piεna intelligεnzia, ne le coʃe vωlgari. Il Maximω Guidω, *Madωnna il fermω chore'*, Fabriciω, *Lω miω lωntanω gire'*, Hωnεstω, *Più nωn attεndω il tuω sωccωrsω Amωre'*; Le quali parole sωnω in tuttω divεrse da le proprie Bωlωgneʃe. Hora perché nωi nωn crediamω, che alcunω dubiti di quelle città, che sωnω poste ne le εxtremità d'Italia, ε se alcunω pur dubita, nωn lω stimiamω degnω de la nostra sωluziωne, però pocω ci rεsta ne la mia discussiωne da dire; la ωnde diʃiandω di depωrre il crivεllo, acciò, che tostω veggiamω quellω, che in essω è rimaʃω; dicω, che Trεntω, ε Turinω, εt Alexandria città, sωnω tantω prωpinque a i termini d'Italia, che nωn ponnω havere pura lωquεla; tal, che se cωsì cωme hannω bruttissimω vωlgare, cωsì l'havessenω bellissimω anchωra negherεi essω εssere veramente Italianω, per la mescωlanza, che ha de lj altri. ε però se cerchiamω il parlare Italianω Illustre, quellω, che cerchiamω, nωn si può in esse città ritrωvare'.

De lω εxcellente parlar vωlgare, il quale è *cωmune a tutti lj Italiani.*
CAP. XVI

Dapoi che havemω cercatω per tutti i salti, ε pascωli d'Italia, ε nωn havemω quella Panthεra, che cerchiamω, trωvatω; per pωtere essa mεljω trωvare, cωn più ragiωne investighiamωla; acciò che quella, che in ogni luogω si sεnte, εt in ogni parte appare, cωn sωlecitω studiω ne le nostre reti tωtalmente inviluppiamω. Ripiljandω adunque i nostri instrumenti da cacciare, dicemω; che in ogni generaziωne di coʃe è di biʃognω, che una ve ne sia, cωn la quale tutte le coʃe di quel medeʃimω gεnere si habbianω a cωmparare, ε pωnderare, ε quindi la meʃura di tutte l'altre piljare; cωme nel numerω, tutte le coʃe si hannω a meʃurare' cωn la unità; ε dicωnsi più, ε menω secωndω che da essa unità sωnω più lωntane, o più ad essa prωpinque. ε cωsì ne i cωlωri, tutti si hannω a miʃurare cωl biancω; ε dicωnsi più, ε meno viʃibili secωndω, che a lui più vicini, ε da lui più distanti si sωnω. ε sì cωme di questi, che mωstranω quantità ε qualità diciamω, parimente di ciascunω de i predicamenti, ε de la sustanzia pensiamω pωtersi dire; cioè, che ogni coʃa si può miʃurare in quel gεnere cωn quella coʃa, che è in essω gεnere simplicissima; la ωnde ne le nostre aziωni, in quantunque spεcie si dividanω, si biʃogna ritrovare questω segnω, cωl quale esse si habbianω a miʃurare'; perciò,

che in quellω, che facciamω cωme semplicemente homini, havemω la virtù, la quale generalmente intendemω; perciò, che secωndω essa giudichiamω l'homω buonω, ε cattivω; in quellω poi, che facciamω cωme homini cittadini, havemω la legge, secωndω la quale si dice buonω, ε cattivω cittadinω; ma in quellω, che cωme homini Italiani facciamω, havemω le coſe simplicissime. Adunque se le aziωni Italiane si hannω a miſurare, ε pωnderare cωn i cωstumi, ε cωn lj habiti, ε cωl parlare', quelle de le aziωni Italiane sωnω simplicissime, che nωn sωnω proprie di niuna città d'Italia, ma sωnω cωmuni in tutte; tra le quali hora si può diſcɛrnere il vωlgare, che di sωpra cercavamω, ɛssere quellω, che in ciascuna città appare, ε che in niuna ripoſa; può bɛn più in una, che in un'altra apparere, cωme fa la simplicissima de le sustanzie, che è Diω, il quale più appare ne l'homω, chɛ ne le bɛstie, ε chɛ ne le piante, ε più in queste, chɛ ne le *minɛre*, ɛt in esse più, chɛ ne lj ɛlementi, ε più nel focω, chɛ ne la tɛrra. ε la simplicissima quantità, che è unω, più appare nel numerω disparω, chɛ nel parω, ɛt il simplicissimω cωlωre, che è il biancω, più appae nel citrinω, chɛ nel vɛrde. Adunque ritrωvatω quellω, che' cercavamω, dicemω, che 'l vωlgare Illustre, Cardinale, Aulicω, ε Cωrtigianω, in Italia, è quellω, il quale è di tutte le città Italiane, ε nωn pare, che sia di niuna; cωl quale i vωlgari di tutte le città d'Italia si hannω a miſurare, pωnderare, e cωmparare'.

Perché si kiami questω parlare Illustre'.

CAP. XVII

Perché adunque a questω ritrωvatω parlare aggiungendω Illustre, Cardinale, Aulicω, ε Cωrtigianω, cωsì lω kiamiamω, al prɛſɛnte diremω; per il che più kiaramente faremω parere quellω, che essω è. Primamente adunque dimωstriamω quellω, che intendiamω di farɛ quandω vi aggiungiamω Illustre, ɛt perché Illustre il dimandiamω; pɛr questω nωi il dicemω Illustre, che illuminante, ɛt illuminatω risplende. ɛt a questω modω nωminiamω lj homini Illustri, o verω perché illuminati di pωtɛnzia soljωnω cωn giustizia, ε carità lj altri illuminare, o verω, che ɛxcellɛntemente amaestrati, ɛxcellɛntemente amaestranω; cωme fa Sɛneca, ε Numa Pωmpiliω, ɛt il vωlgare di cui parliamω; Il quale inalzatω di magistɛriω, ε di pωtɛnzia, inalza i suoi di hωnωre, ε di gloria. ε che 'l sia da magistɛriω inalzatω si vede, ɛssendo elji di tanti rωçi vωcabωli Italiani, di tante perplɛsse cωnstruziωni, di tante difettive prωnunzie, di tanti cωntadineschi accɛnti, cωsì ɛgregiω, cωsì districato, cωsì perfettω, e cωsì civile ridωttω; cωme Cinω da Pistωja, ε L'amicω suω, ne le lωrω canzωni dimωstranω. Che 'l sia poi ɛxaltatω di pωtɛnzia, appare; ε qual coſa è di maggiωre pωtɛnzia, che quella, che può i cuori de lj homini vωltare', in modω, che faccia cωlui, che

nωn vuole vωlere, ε cωlui, che vuole nωn vωlere, cωme ha fatto questω, ε fa? Che elji poʃcia inalzi d'hωnωre', chi lω pωssiɛde, è in prωntω; nωn sωljωnω i dωmestici suoi vincere di fama i Rε, i Marcheʃi, i Cωnti, ε tutti lj altri grandi? cɛrtω questω nωn ha biʃognω di pruova. Quantω elji faccia poi i suoi familjari glωriωʃi, nωi stessi l'habbiamω cωnωʃciutω, i quali per la dωlceza di questa gloria pωnemω dωpω le spalle il nostrω ɛxiliω. Adunque meritamente' devemω essω kiamare Illustre'.

Perché questω parlare si kiami Cardinale, Aulicω, ε Cωrtigianω.
CAP. XVIII

Nωn sɛnza ragiωne essω vωlgare Illustre ωrniamω di secωnda giunta, cioè, che Cardinale il kiamiamo; perciò, che sì cωme tuttω l'uʃciω sɛguita il Cardine, tal che dωve il Cardine si volta, anchωr essω (o ɛntrω, o fuori che 'l si piɛghi) si volge; cωsì tutta la mωltitudine de i vωlgari de le città si volge, ε rivolge, si muove, ε cessa, secωndω, che fa questω. Il quale veramente appare ɛsser padre di familja: nωn cava elji ogni giωrnω i spinωʃi arbωʃcɛlli de la Italica sylva? nωn pianta elji ogni giωrnω semente, o inseriʃce piante? che fannω altrω lj agricωli di lɛi, senωn, che liɛvanω, ε pongωnω, cωme è detto? Il perché mɛrita cɛrtamente ɛssere di tantω vωcabωlω ωrnatω. Perché poi nωi il nωminiamω Aulicω, questa è la cagiωne; perciò che se nωi Italiani havessemω aula, questi sarɛbbe palatinω. Se la Aula poi è cωmune caʃa di tuttω il rɛgnω, ε sacra gubernatrice di tutte le parti di essω; cωnvenevωle coʃa è, che' ciò, che si truova ɛsser tale, che sia cωmune a tutti, ε propriω di nuinω, in ɛssa cωnvɛrsi, ɛt habiti; né alcuna altra habitaziωne è degna di tantω habitatωre; Questω veramente ci pare ɛsser quel vωlgare, del quale nωi parliamω; ε quinci advιɛne, che quelli, che cωnvɛrsanω in tutte le cωrti regali, parlanω sɛmpre cωn vωlgare Illustre. ε quinci anchωra è intervenutω, che 'l nostrω vωlgare cωme fωrestiɛrω va peregrinandω, ɛt albergandω ne lj humili aʃyli, nωn havɛndω nωi aula. Meritamente anchωra si dɛe' kiamare Cωrtigianω, perciò, che la Cωrtigiania niɛnte altrω è, chɛ una peʃatura de le coʃe, che si hannω a fare; ε cωnciò sia, che la statɛra di questa peʃatura sωlamente ne le ɛxcellentissime cωrti ɛssere solja; quinci advιɛne, che tuttω quellω, che ne le aziωni nostre è bɛn peʃatω, si kiama Cωrtigianω; la ωnde ɛssɛndω questω ne la ɛxcellentissima Cωrte d'Italia peʃatω, mɛrita ɛsser dettω Cωrtigianω. Ma a dire che 'l sia ne' la ɛxcellentissima Cωrte d'Italia peʃatω, pare fabulωʃω, ɛssɛndω nωi privi di Cωrte; a la qual coʃa facilmente si rispωnde; Perciò che, avɛgna, che la Cωrte (secωndω che unica si pilja, cωme quella del Re di Alemagna) in Italia nωn sia, le mɛmbra sue però nωn ci mancanω; ε cωme le' mɛmbra di quella da un Principe si uniscωnω, cωsì le mɛmbra di questa, dal

graziωſω lume de la ragiωne sωnω unite; ε però sarebbe’ falsω a dire’ nωi Italiani mancar di Cωrte’, quantunque’ manchiamω di Principe’; perciò, che’ havemω Cωrte’, avεgna che la sia cωrpωralmente’ dispεrsa.

Che i vωlgari Italici in unω si riducanω, ε quellω si kiami Italianω.

CAP. XIX

Questω vωlgare adunque, che εssere Illustre, Cardinale, Aulicω, ε Cωrtigianω havemω dimωstratω, dicemω εsser quellω, che si kiama vωlgare Italianω; perciò, che sì cωme si può trωvare un vωlgare, che è propriω di Cremωna, cωsì se ne può trωvare unω, che è propriω di Lωmbardia, εt un altrω, che è propriω di tutta la sinistra parte d’Italia; ε cωme tutti questi si ponnω trωvare, cωsì parimente si può trωvare quellω, che è di tutta Italia, ε sì cωme quellω si kiama Cremωneſe, ε quell’altrω Lωmbardω, ε quell’altrω di mεça Italia, cωsì questω, che è di tutta Italia, si kiama Vωlgare Italianω. Questω veramente hannω uſatω lj’Illustri Dωttωri, che in Italia hannω fattω pωεmi in lingua vωlgare; cioè i Siciliani, i Puljεſi, i Tωscani, i Rωmagnuoli, i Lωmbardi, ε quelli de la Marca trivigiana, ε de la Marca d’Ancωna. ε cωnciò sia, che la nostra intenziωne’ (cωme havemω nel principiω de l’opera prωmessω) sia de insegnare la dωttrina de la εlωquεnzia vωlgare; però da essω vωlgare Italianω, cωme da εxcellentissimω, cωminciandω, tratteremω ne i seguεnti libri, chi sianω quelli, che pensiamω degni di uſare essω, ε perché, εt a che modω, ε dωve, ε quandω, εt a chi essω sia da drizare’. Le quali coſe kiarite che sianω, haremω cura di kiarire’ i vωlgari inferiωri, di parte in parte’ ſcendendω finω a quellω, che’ è d’una famiglia sωla.

LIBRO II

IL SECωNDω LIBRω DE LA VωLGARE ƐLωQUƐNZIA DI DANTE ALIGIERI.

Quali sωnω quelli, che dennω uʃare il vωlgare Illustre, ε quali no.

CAPITωLω PRIMω

Prωmettɛndω un'altra volta la diligɛnzia del nostrω ingegnω, ε ritωrnandω al calamω de la utile opera, sωpra ogni coʃa cωnfɛssiamω, che 'l sta bɛne ad uʃarsi il vωlgare Italianω Illustre, cωsì ne la proʃa, cωme nel vɛrʃω; Ma perciò, che quelli, che scrivenω in proʃa, piljanω essω vωlgare Illustre specialmente da i trωvatωri; ε però quellω, che ɛ̀ statω trωvatω, rimane un fermω ɛxɛmpiω a le proʃe, ma nωn al cωntrariω; perciò, che alcune coʃe paiωnω dare principalità al vɛrʃω; adunque secωndω che essω ɛ̀ mɛtricω, versifichiamωlω, trattandωlω cωn quellω ωrdine, che nel fine del primω librω havemω prωmessω. Cerchiamω adunque primamente, se tutti quelli, che fannω vɛrsi vωlgari lω dennω uʃare o no. Verω ɛ̀, che, cωsì superficialmente, appare de sì; perciò, che ciascunω, che fa vɛrsi, dɛe ωrnare i ʃuoi vɛrsi in quantω ɛl può; La ωnde nωn ɛssɛndω niunω sì grande ωrnamentω, cωme ɛ̀ il vωlgare Illustre, pare, che ciascun versificatωre lω debbia uʃare. ωltre di questω, se quellω, che in suω gɛnere ɛ̀ ottimω, si mescωla cωn lω inferiωre, pare, che nωn sωlamente nωn li toglia nulla, ma che lω faccia migliωre; ε però se alcun versificatωre (anchωra che lω faccia rωçamente vɛrʃi) lω mescωlerà cωn la sua rωçeza, nωn sωlamente a lɛi farà bɛne, ma appare, che cωsì le sia biʃognω di fare; perciò, che mωltω ɛ̀ più biʃognω di ajutω a quelli, che ponnω pocω, che a quelli, che ponnω assai; ε cωsì appare, che a tutti i versificatωri sia licitω di uʃarlω; ma questω ɛ̀ falsissimω; perciò, che anchωra lj ɛxcellentissimi pωɛti, nωn se ne dennω sɛmpre vestire, cωme per le coʃe disωttω trattate si pωtrà cωmprɛndere. Adunque questω Illustre vωlgare, ricerca homini simili a sé; sì cωme' anchωra fannω lj altri nostri cωstumi, ɛt habiti; la magnificenzia grande ricerca homini pωtɛnti, la purpura, homini nobili; cωsì anchωr questω vuole homini di ingegnω, ε di ʃcιɛnzia ɛxcellɛnti; ε lj altri dispɾɛgia; cωme per le coʃe, che poi si dirannω, sarà manifɛstω. Tuttω quellω adunque, che a nωi si cωnvιɛne, o per il gɛnere, o per la spɛcie, o per lω individuω ci si cωnvιɛne; cωme ɛ̀ sɛntire, ridere, armegiare; ma questω a nωi nωn si cωnvιɛne per il gɛnere; perché sarɛbbe cωnvenevωle anchω a le bestie; nɛ̀ per la spɛcie; perché a tutti lj homini saria cωnvenevωle; di che nωn c'ɛ̀ alcun

dubbiω; che niun dice, chel si cωnvɛnga a i mωntanari; [si cωnviene adunque per lω individuω. Ma nulla a lω individuω] nωn si cωnviɛne’ senωn per le proprie dignità; cωme è mercantare, armegiare, rɛgere’; ɛ però se le coʃe cωnveniɛnti risguardanω le dignità, cioè i dɛgni, ɛt alcuni possωnω ɛssere degni, altri più degni, ɛt altri dignissimi, è manifɛstω, che le coʃe buone a i degni, le miljωri ai più degni, le ottime a i dignissimi si cωnvɛngωnω; ɛ cωnciò sia, che la lωquɛla nωn altrimenti sia necessariω instrumentω a i nostri cωncɛtti, di quellω, che si sia il cavallω al Sωldatω, ɛ cωnvenɛndωsi lj ottimi cavalli a lj ottimi sωldati, a lj ottimi cωncɛtti (cωme è dettω) la ottima lωquɛla si cωnverrà; ma lj ottimi cωncɛtti nωn ponnω ɛsser senωn dωve è ʃciɛnzia, ɛt ingegnω; adunque la ottima lωquɛla nωn si cωnviɛn senωn a quelli, che hannω ʃciɛnzia, ɛt ingegnω; ɛ cωsì nωn a tutti i versificatωri si cωnviɛn ottima lωquɛla, ɛ cωnsequɛntemente né l’ottimω vωlgare; cωnciò sia, che’ mωlti sɛnza ʃciɛnzia, ɛ sɛnza ingegnω faccianω vɛrsi; ɛ però se a tutti nωn cωnviɛne’, tutti nωn dennω uʃare ɛssω; perciò, che niunω deɛ far quellω che nωn li si cωnviɛne’. ɛ dωve dice, che ogniunω dɛe ωrnare i suoi vɛrʃi quantω può, affermiamω ɛsser verω; ma né il bove ɛpiphito, né il porcω balteatω kiameremω ωrnatω, anzi fattω bruttω; ɛ di lωrω si rideremω; perciò, che’ l’ωrnamentω nωn è altrω, che’ unω aggiungere’ qualche’ cωnvenevωle’ coʃa a la coʃa, che’ si ωrna. A quellω ωve’ dice, che la coʃa superiωre cωn la inferiωre mescωlata adduce perfeziωne, dicω ɛsser verω, quandω la separaziωne nωn rimane; cωme è se l’orω fωnderemω insiɛme cωn lω argɛntω; ma se la separaziωne rimane’, la coʃa inferiωre si fa più vile, cωme è mescωlare bɛlle donne’ cωn brutte’; La ωnde, cωnciò sia, che la sentɛnzia de i versificatωri sɛmpre’ rimanga separatamente’ mescωlata cωn le parole’, se la nωn sarà ottima ad ottimω vωlgare’ accωmpagnata, nωn miljωre’, ma peggiωre’ apparerà; a guiʃa di una brutta donna, che’ sia di seta, ɛ d’orω vestita.

In qual matɛria stia bɛne uʃare il vωlgare’ Illustre’.

CAP. II

Dapoi che havemω dimωstratω, che nωn tutti i versificatωri, ma sωlamente’ lj ɛxcellentissimi dennω uʃare’ il vωlgare’ Illustre’, cωnsequɛnte’ coʃa è dimωstrare’ poi, se tutte le matɛrie’ sωnω da ɛssere trattare in essω, o no; ɛ senωn sωnω tutte, veder separatamente’ quali sωnω degne’ di essω. Circa la qual coʃa prima è da trovare quellω che’ nωi intendemω, quandω dicemω, degna ɛssere’ quella coʃa, che’ ha dignità, sì cωme è nobile’ quella, che’ ha nobilità; ɛ cωsì cωnωʃciutω lω habituante, si cωnωsce lω habituatω, in quantω habituatω di questω; però cωnωʃciuta la dignità cωnωʃceremω anchωra il degnω. è adunque la dignità unω ɛffɛttω, o verω tɛrminω de i mɛriti; perciò che quandω unω ha

meritatω bɛne’ dicemω ɛssere’ pervenutω a la dignità del bɛne’; ɛ quandω ha meritatω male’, a quella del male’; cioè quellω, che’ ha bɛn cωmbattutω, è pervenutω a la dignità de la vittωria, ɛ quellω, che ha bɛn gωvernatω, a quella del rɛgnω, ɛ cωsì il bugiardω a la dignità de la vergogna, ɛt il ladrωne’ a quella de’ la morte. Ma cωnciò sia, che’ in quelli, che’ mɛritanω bɛne’ si faccianω cωmparaziωni, ɛ cωsì ne lj altri; perché alcuni meritanω bɛne, altri mɛljω, altri ωttimamente, ɛt alcuni mɛritanω male, altri pɛggiω, altri pɛssimamente; ɛ cωnciò anchωra sia, che tali cωmparaziωni nωn si faccianω, senωn havɛndω rispɛttω al tɛrminω de i mɛriti, il qual tɛrminω (cωme è dettω) si dimanda dignità, manifɛsta coʃa è, che parimente le dignità hannω cωmparaziωne tra sé, secωndω il più, ɛt il menω; cioè, che alcune sωnω grandi, altre maggiωri, altre grandissime; ɛ cωnsequɛntemente’ alcuna coʃa è degna, altra più degna, altra dignissima; ɛ cωnciò sia, che la cωmparaziωne de le dignità nωn si faccia circa il medeʃimω ωbjɛttω, ma circa divɛrsi, perché dicemω più degnω quellω, che è degnω di una altra coʃa più grande, ɛ dignissimω quellω, che è degnω di una altra coʃa grandissima; perciò, che niunω può ɛssere di una istessa coʃa più degnω; manifɛstω è, che le coʃe ottime (secωndω che porta il devere) sωnω de le ottime degne; La ωnde ɛssendω questω vωlgare Illustre’ (che dicemω) ωttimω sωpra tutti lj altri vulgari, cωnsequɛnte coʃa è, che sωlamente le ωttime matɛrie, che kiamiamω dignissime, è buonω al preʃɛnte investigarle. Per kiareza de le quali coʃe, è da sapere, che sì cωme’ ne l’homω sωnω tre anime, cioè la vegetabile, la animale, ɛ la raziωnale, cωsì essω per tre sentiɛri camina; perciò, che secωndω, che ha la anima vegetabile, cerca quellω, che è utile’, in che partecipa cωn le piante; secωndω, che ha la animale, cerca quellω, che è dilettevole, in che partecipa cωn le bɛste; ɛ secωndω, che’ ha la raziωnale, cerca l’hωnestω, in che è sωlω, o verω a la natura angɛlica s’accωmpagna; tal, che tuttω quel che facciamω, par che si faccia per queste tre coʃe; ɛ perché in ciascuna di esse tre, sωnω alcune coʃe, che sωnω più grandi, ɛt altre grandissime; per la qual ragiωne quelle coʃe, che sωnω grandissime, sωnω da ɛssere grandissimamente trattate; ɛ cωnsequɛntemente cωl grandissimω vωlgare; ma è da disputare quali si sianω queste coʃe grandissime’. ɛ primamente’ in quellω, che è utile; nel quale se accortamente cωnsideriamω la intenziωne di tutti quelli, che cercanω la utilità, niuna altra troveremω, chɛ la salute’. Secωndariamente in quellω, che è dilettevωle; nel quale dicemω, quellω ɛssere massimamente dilettevωle’, che’ per il preciωʃissimω ωbjɛttω de l’appetitω dilɛtta; ɛ questi sωnω i piaceri di Vɛnere’. Nel tɛrzω, che’ è l’hωnɛstω, niun dubita ɛssere’ la virtù. Il perché appare queste tre coʃe, cioè la salute, i piaceri di Vɛnere, ɛ la virtù ɛssere quelle tre grandissime matɛrie, che si dennω grandissimamente trattare, cioè quelle coʃe, che a queste grandissime sωnω; cωme è la galjardeza

de l’armi, l’ardɛnzia de l’amωre, ɛ la regωla de la vωluntà. Circa le quali tre coʃe, sωle (se bɛn risguardiamω) trωveremω lj huomini Illustri haver vωlgarmente cantatω; cioè, Beltrame di Bωrniω le’ armi; Arnaldω Daniɛlω lω Amωre; Gerardω de Bωrnellω la rectitudine; Cinω da Pistωja lω Amωre; Lω amicω suω la rectitudine.

Beltrame adunque dice’: *Nωn pos nul dat cωn cantar nω ɛxparia*. Arnaldω: *Laura amara fal bruol brancum danur*. Gerardω: *Piu sωlaz reveilar, chɛ per trop ɛn dωrmir*. Cinω: *Degnω sωn iω, ch’iω mora*. Lω amicω suω: *Dolja mi rɛca ne lω cuore ardire’*.

Nωn truωvω poi, che niun Italianω habbia fin qui cantatω de l’armi. Vedutω adunque queste coʃe (che havemω dettω) sarà manifɛstω quellω, che sia nel vωlgare altissimω da cantare’.

In qual modω di rime si debbia uʃare il vωlgare Altissimω.

CAP. III

Hora si sfωrzeremω sωlicitamente di investigare il modω, cωl quale debbiamω stringere quelle matɛrie, che sωnω degne di tantω vωlgare. Vωlɛndω adunque dare il modω, cωl quale queste degne matɛrie si debbianω legare; Primω dicemω, deversi a la memoria ridurre, che quelli, che hannω scrittω pωɛmi vωlgari, hannω essi per mωlti modi mandati fuori; cioè alcuni per Canzωni, altri per Ballate, altri per Sωnetti, altri per alcuni altri illegittimi, ɛt irregulari modi; cωme disωttω si mωstrerà. Di questi modi adunque, il modω de le Canzωni ɛssere ɛxcellentissimω giudichiamω; la ωnde se lω ɛxcellentissimω è de lω ɛxcellentissimω degnω, cωme’ disωpra è prωvatω, le matɛrie, che sωnω degne de lω ɛxcellentissimω vωlgare, sωnω parimente degne de lω ɛxcellentissimω modω; ɛ cωnsequentemente sωnω da trattare ne le Canzωni; ɛ che ‘l modω de le Canzωni poi sia tale, cωme si è dettω, si può per mωlte ragiωni investigare. ɛ prima ɛssɛndω canzωne tuttω quellω, che si scrive in vɛrsi, ɛt ɛssɛndω a le canzωni sωle tal vωcabωlω attribuitω, cɛrtω nωn sɛnza antiqua prerωgativa è prωcɛssω. Apprɛssω quellω, che per sɛ stessω adempie tuttω quellω, perché egli è fattω, pare ɛsser più nωbile, che quellω, che ha biʃognω di coʃe, che sianω fuori di sé; ma le canzωni fannω per sɛ stesse’ tuttω quellω, che dennω; il che le ballate nωn fannω, perciò, che hannω biʃognω di sωnatωri, a li quali sωnω fatte; adunque sɛguita, che le canzωni sianω da ɛssere stimate più nobili de le ballate; ɛ cωnsequɛntemente il modω lωrω ɛssere sωpra gli altri nωbilissimω; cωnciò sia, che’ niunω dubiti, che il modω de le ballate nωn sia più nobile di quellω de i sωnetti. Apprɛssω, pare che quelle coʃe sianω più nobili,

che arrɛcanω più hωnωre a quelli, che le hannω fatte, ɛ le canzωni arrɛcanω più hωnωre a quelli, che le hannω fatte, che nωn fannω le ballate’; adunque sωnω di ɛsse più nobili, ɛ cωnseguɛntemente il modω lωrω è nωbilissimω. ωltre’ di questω, le coʃe, che sωnω nωbilissime, mωltω caramente si cωnsɛrvanω; ma tra le coʃe cantate, le canzωni sωnω mωltω caramente cωnservate, cωme appare a cωlωrω, che vedenω i libri; adunque le canωni sωnω nωbilissime; ɛ cωnsequɛntamante il modo lωrω è nωbilissimω. Appreʃʃω ne le coʃe artificiali, quellω è nωbilissimω, che cωmprɛnde tutta l’arte’; ɛssɛndω adunque le coʃe che si cantanω artificiali, ɛ ne le canzωni sωle cωmprɛndendωsi tutta l’arte, le canzωni sωnω nωbilissime; ɛ cωsì il modω lωrω è nωbilissimω sωpra gli altri; che tutta l’arte poi sia ne le canzωni cωmpreʃa, in questω si manifesta, che tuttω quellω, che si truova de l’arte è in esse, na nωn si cωnvɛrte; questω segnω adunque, di ciò che dicemω è nel cωnspɛttω di ogniunω prωntω; perciò, che tuttω quellω da la cima de le teste de gli Illustri pωɛti è diʃceʃω a le lωrω labbra, sωlamente’ ne le canzωni si ritruova. ɛ però al prωpoʃitω è manifɛstω, che quelle coʃe, che sωnω degne di altissimω vωlgare, si dennω trattare ne le canzωni.

Quali dennω ɛssere i suggɛtti de le canzωni.

CAP. IV

Dapoi che havemω districandω apprωvatω, quali huomini sianω degni del vωlgare aulicω, ɛ che matɛrie sianω degne’ di essω, ɛ parimente il modω, il quale facemω degnω di tantω hωnωre, che sωlω a lω altissimω vωlgare si cωnvɛgna. Prima, che nωi andiamω ad altrω, dikiariamω il modω de le Canzωni, le quali pajωnω da mωlti più tostω per caʃω, chɛ per arte uʃurparsi; ɛ manifestiamω il magistɛriω di quell’arte, il quale fin qui è statω caʃualmente preʃω, laʃciandω da parte il modω de le Ballate, ɛ de i sωnetti; perciò, che essω intendemω di lucidare nel quartω librω di questa opera nostra, quandω del vωlgare mediocre tratteremω. Riveggɛndω adunque le coʃe, che havemω dettω, si ricωrdiamω havere’ spesse volte, quelli, che fannω vɛrsi vωlgari, per pωɛti nωminati; il che sɛnza dubbiω ragiωnevωlmente havemω havutω ardimentω di dire; perciò, che sωnω certamente pωɛti, se dirittamente la pωɛʃia cωnsideriamω; la quale nωn è altrω, chɛ una finziωne rettorica; ɛ posta in muʃica; Nωn di menω sωnω differɛnti da i gran pωɛti, ciωè da i regωlati; perciò, che quelli hannω uʃatω sermωne, ɛt arte regulata, ɛ questi (cωme si è dettω) hannω ogni coʃa a caʃω; il perché advιɛne, che quantω più strettamente imitiamω quelli, tantω più drittamente cωmpωniamω; ɛ però nωi, che vωlemω porre ne le opere nostre qualche dωttrina, ci biʃogna le lωrω pωɛtiche dωttrine imitare. Adunque sωpra ogni coʃa dicemω, che ciascunω debbia piljare il peʃω de la matɛria ɛquale a le

proprie spalle, acciò, che la virtù di esse dal troppω peſω gravata, nωn lω sforzi a cadere nel fangω. Questω è quellω, che ‘l maestrω nostrω Hωraziω cωmanda, quandω nel principiω de la sua *Pωεtica* dice’:

Vωi, che scrivete’ vεrsi, habbiate cura
Di tor subjεttω al valωr vostrω εquale’.

Dipoi, ne le coſe, che ci ωccωrrenω a dire, devemω uſare diviſiωne, cωnsiderandω se sωnω da cantarsi cωn mωdω tragicω, o comicω, o elegiacω; per la tragεdia intendemω il stile superiωre; [per commedia il stile inferiωre; per elegia il stile] de i miſeri. Se le coſe, che ci ωccωrrenω, pare, che sianω da εssere cantate cωl modω tragicω, alhωra è da piljare il vωlgare Illustre; ε cωnsequεntemente da legare la canzωne; ma se sωnω da cantarsi cωn comicω, si pilja alcuna volta il vωlgare’ mediocre, εt alcuna volta l’humile; la diviſiωne de i quali nel quartω di questa opera si riserviamω a mωstrare; Se poi cωn elegiacω, biſogna, che sωlamente piljamω l’humile’. Ma laſciamω lj altri da parte, εt hora (cωme è il devere) trattiamω del stilω tragicω. Appare cεrtamente’, che nωi uſiamω il stilω tragicω, quandω ε la gravità de le sentεnzie’, ε la supεrbia de i vεrsi, ε la εlevaziωne de le cωnstruziωni, ε la εxcellεnzia de i vωcabuli si cωncordanω insiεme; ma perché (se bεn si ricωrdiamω) già è prωvatω, che le coſe sωmme sωnω degne de le sωmme, ε questω stilω, che kiamiamω tragicω, pare εssere il sωmmω de i stili, però quelle coſe, che havemω già distinte dωvεrsi sωmmamente cantare, sωnω da εssere in questω sωlω stilω cantate; cioè la salute, lω amωre, ε la virtù, ε quelle altre coſe, che per cagiωn di εsse sωnω ne la mente nostra cωncepute, pur che per niunω accidεnte nωn sianω fatte vili. Guardisi adunque ciascunω, ε diſcεrna quellω, che dicemω; ε quandω vuole queste tre coſe puramente cantare, o verω quelle; che ad esse tre drittamente, ε puramente seguenω, prima bevεndω nel fωnte di Hεlicωna, pωnga sicuramente a l’accωrdata Lira il sωmmω plεttrω, ε cωstumatamente cωminci; ma a fare questa canzωne, ε questa diviſiωne cωme si dεe’, qui è la difficultà, qui è la fatica; perciò, che mai sεnza acume di ingegnω, né sεnza assiduità d’arte, né sεnza habitω si ſciεnzie nωn si pωtrà fare. ε questi sωnω quelli, che ‘l pωεta nel .vi. de la Enεida kiama dilεtti da Diω, ε da la ardεnte virtù alzati al ciεlω, ε filjuoli de li dεi, avεgna, che figuratamente parli. ε però si cωnfesa la ſcioccheza di cωlωrω, i quali sεnza arte, ε sεnza ſciεnzia, cωnfidandωsi sωlamente de il lωrω ingegnω, si pongωnω a cantare sωmmamente le coſe sωmme. Adunque cεssinω questi tali da tanta lωrω preſunziωne; ε se per la lωrω naturale desidia sωnω oche, nωn voljanω l’Aquila, che altamente vωla imitare’.

De la qualità de i vɛrsi de le canzωni.
CAP. V

A nωi pare di haver dettω de la gravità de le sentɛnzie a bastanza, o almenω tuttω quellω, che a l'opera nostra si rikiɛde; il perché si affretteremω di andare a la supɛrbia de i vɛrsi. Circa i quali è da sapere, che' i nostri precɛssωri hannω ne le lωrω canzωni uʃatω varie sorti di vɛrsi, il che fannω parimente i mωdɛrni; ma in sin qui niun vɛrsω ritrωviamω, che habbia la undɛ syllaba trappassatω, né sωttω la tɛrza diʃcesω. ɛt avɛgna, che i pωɛti Italiani habbianω uʃatω tutte le sorti di vɛrsi, che sωnω da tre syllabe finω a undeci, nωn di menω il vɛrsω di cinque syllabe, ɛ quellω di sɛtte, ɛ quellω di undici, sωnω in uʃω più frequɛnte; ɛ dωpω lωrω si uʃa il trisyllabω più de lj altri; de li quali tutti, quellω di undici syllabe sembra ɛssere il superiωre, sì di ωccupaziωne di tɛmpω, cωme di capacità di sentɛnzie, di cωnstruziωni, ɛ di vωcabωli; la belleza de le quali coʃe tutte se multiplica in essω, cωme manifestamente appare; perciò, che ωvunque sωnω multiplicate le coʃe, che peʃanω, si multiplica parimente il peʃω; ɛ questω pare, che tutti i dωttωri habbianω cωnωʃciutω, havɛndω le lωrω Illustri canzωni principiate da essω; Cωme Gerardω di Bωrnɛllω: *Ara auʃirem ɛncabalitz, cantarz*.

Il qual vɛrsω, avɛgna, che paja di diɛce syllabe, è però secωndω la verità de la coʃa di undeci; perciò, che le due ultime cωnsωnanti nωn sωnω de la syllaba precɛdɛnte; ɛt avɛgna, che nωn habbianω propria vωcale, nωn pɛrdenω però la virtù de la syllaba; ɛt il sɛgnω è, che ivi la rima si fωrniʃce cωn una vωcale, il che ɛsser nωn può, senωn per virtù de l'altra, che ivi si sωttintɛnde'. Il Re di Navarra: *Di fin Amωr suvɛnt sen ɛ bωntè*.

ωve si cωnsidera l'accɛntω, ɛ la sua cagiωne, apparerà ɛssere ɛndecasyllabω. Guidω Guinizɛlli: *Al cuor gentil repara sɛmpre Amωre'*. Il Giudice di Cωlωnna da Messina: *Amωr, che lωngamente m'hai menatω*. Rinaldω d'Aquinω: *Per fin Amωre vò sì liɛtamente'*. Cinω da Pistωja: *Nωn spɛrω, che già mai per mia salute*. Lω amicω suω: *Amωr, che muovi tua virtù dal ciɛlω*.

Et avɛgna, che questω vɛrsω ɛndecasyllabω (cωme si è dettω) sia sωpra tutti per il devere celebɛrrimω, nωn di menω sel piljerà una cɛrta cωmpagnia de lω ɛptasyllabω, pur che essω però tɛnga il principatω, più kiaramente, ɛ più altamente parerà insuperbirsi; ma questω si rimanga più ωltra a dilucidarsi. [ɛ dicenω poi lω ɛptasyllabω seguire quellω sωpra tutti celeberrimω.] Dωpω questω, quellω, che kiamiamω pɛntasyllabω, ɛ poi il trisyllabω ωrdiniamω; Ma quel di nove syllabe poʃcia, per ɛssere' il trisyllabω triplicatω, o verω mai nωn fu in hωnωre, over per il fastidiω è uʃcitω di uʃω. Quelli poi di syllabe pari, per la

sua rωçeza nωn uʃiamω senωn rare volte; perciò, che ritɛngωnω la natura de i lωrω numeri, i quali sɛmpre sωggiacenω a i numeri caffi, sì cωme fa la matɛria a la fωrma. ɛ cωsì raccωljɛndω le coʃe dette, appare lω ɛndecasylabω ɛssere superbissimω vɛrsω; ɛ questω è quellω, che nωi cercavamω. Hora ci rɛsta di investighare de le cωnstruziωni ɛlevate, ɛ de i vωcabωli alti, ɛ finalmente preparate le legne, ɛ le funi, insegneremω a che modω il predettω faʃciω, cioè la Canzωne, si dɛbbia legare'.

De le cωnstruziωni, che si dennω uʃare ne le Canzωni.
CAP. VI

Perché circa il vωlgare Illustre, la nostra intenziωne si dimωra, il quale è sωpra tutti nωbilissimω; però havɛndω ʃcɛlte le coʃe, che sωnω degne de cantarsi in essω, le quali sωnω quelle tre nωbilissime, che disωpra havemω prωvate, ɛt havɛndω ad esse ɛlɛttω il modω de le canzωni, sì cωme' superiωre a tutti lj altri modi, ɛt acciò, che essω modω di canzωni pωssiamω più perfɛttamente insegnare, havɛndω già alcune coʃe preparate, cioè il stilω, ɛt i vɛrsi, hora de la cωnstruziωne diremω. è adunque' da sapere, che nωi kiamiamω cωnstruziωne una regωlata cωmpωʃiziωne di parole, cωme è, *Aristωtele diè opera a la Philωʃωphia nel tɛmpω di Alexandrω*; qui sωnω diɛce parole poste regulatamente insiɛme, ɛ fannω una cωnstruziωne. Ma circa questa prima è da cωnsiderare, che de le cωnstruziωni, altra è congrua, ɛt altra è incongrua. ɛ perché (se il principiω de la nostra diviʃiωne bɛne si ricωrdiamω) nωi cerchiamω sωlamente le coʃe supreme, la incongrua in questa nostra investigaziωne nωn ha locω; perciò, ch'ella tiɛne il gradω inferiωre de la bωntà. Avergogninsi adunque, avergogninsi lji Idioti di havere da qui inanzi tanta audacia, che vadanω a le Canzωni; de i quali nωn altrimenti sωlemω ridersi, di quellω, che si farɛbbe de un ciɛcω, il quale distinguesse' i cωlωri. è adunque la cωnstruziωne congrua, quella che cerchiamω. Ma ci accade un'altra diviʃiωne di nωn minωre difficultà, avanti che parliamω di quella cωnstruziωne, che cerchiamω, cioè di quella, che è piɛnissima di urbanità; ɛ questa diviʃiωne è, che mωlti sωnω i gradi de le cωnstruziωni, cioè lω insipidω, il quale è de le persωne grosse; cωme è, *Piɛrω ama mωltω Madonna Bɛrta*. ɛcci il simplicemente sapωritω, il quale è de i Scωlari rigidi, o verω de i Maestri; cωme è *Di tutti i miʃeri m'increʃce, ma ho maggiωr piɛtà di cωlωrω, i quali in ɛxiliω affligɛndωsi rivedenω sωlamente in sωgniω le patrie lωrω*. ɛcci anchωra il sapωritω, ɛ vɛnustω, il quale è di alcuni, che cωsì disωpravia piljanω la Retorica; cωme è, *La lωdevωle discreziωne del Marcheʃe da ɛste, ɛ la sua preparata magnificɛnzia, fa essω a tutti ɛssere*

dilɛttω'. ɛcci appreſſω il ſapωritω, ɛ vɛnuſtω, ɛt anchωra ɛxcɛlſω, il quale è de i dettati Illuſtri; cωme è , *Havɛndω Totila mandatω fuori del tuω ſenω grandiſſima parte de i fiωri, o Fiωrɛnza, tardω in Sicilia, ɛt indarnω ſe n'andò*. Queſtω gradω di cωnſtruziωne kiamiamω ɛxcellɛntiſſimω; ɛ queſtω è quellω, che nωi cerchiamω, inveſtigandω (cωme ſi è dettω) le coſe ſupreme; ɛ di queſtω ſωlamente le Illuſtre Canzωni ſi truovanω cωntexte'. Cωme Gerardω, *Si per mes ſωbrɛtes nωn feſ*. Il Re di Navara, *Redamωn que in mωn cor repaire'*. Fωlchettω de Marſilia, *Tan m'abelis l'amωrωs penſamen*. Arnaldω Daniɛllω, *Solvi, che ſai lω ſωbraffan, chenſωrz*. Amerigω de Belmi, *Nuls bωn nωn pot cωmplir addretamen*. Amerigω de Peculianω, *Si cωm l'arbres che per ſωbrè carcar*. Guidω Guinicɛlli, *Tɛngω di fωlle impreſa a lω ver dire'*. Guidω Cavalcanti, *Poi che di dolja cuor cωnviɛn, ch'iω porti*. Cinω da Piſtωja, *Avɛgna, ch'iω nωn haggia più pɛr tɛmpω*. Lω amicω ſuω, *Amωr, che ne la mente mi ragiωna*.

Nωn ti maraviljare Lettωre, ch'iω habbia tanti autωri a la memωria ridωtti; perciò, che nωn poſſemω giudicare quella cωnſtruziωne, che nωi kiamiamω ſuppreſſa, senωn per ſimili ɛxɛmpii. ɛ fωrſe utiliſſima coſa ſarɛbbe, per habituar quella, haver vedutω i regωlati pωɛti, cioè Virgiliω, la *Mɛtamorphωſis* di ωvidiω, Staziω, ɛ Lucanω; ɛ quelli anchωra, che hannω uſatω altiſſime proſe; cωme è Tulliω, Liviω, Pliniω, Frωntinω, Paulω Oroſiω, ɛ mωlti altri, i quali la noſtra amica ſωlitudine ci invita a vedere. Cɛſſinω adunque i ſeguaci de la ignωranzia, che ɛxtollenω Guittωne d'Arezω, ɛt alcuni altri, i quali ſoljωnω alcune volte ne i vωcabωli, ɛ ne le cωnſtruziωni ɛſſere ſimili a la plɛbe'.

De i vωcabωli, che ſi dennω ponere ne le canzωni.
CAP. VII

La ſucceſſiva prωvinzia del noſtrω prωcɛdere ricerca, che sianω dikiariti quelli vωcabωli grandi, che ſωnω degni di ſtare ſωttω l'altiſſimω ſtilω. Cωminciandω adunque, affirmiamω, nωn ɛſſere piccωla difficultà de lω intellɛttω a fare la diviſiωne de i vωcabωli, perciò, che vedemω, che ſe ne poſſωnω di mωlte maniɛre trωvare. De i vωcabωli adunque alcuni ſωnω puerili, altri feminili, ɛt altri virili; ɛ di queſti alcuni ſilvɛſtri, ɛt alcuni cittadineſchi kiamiamω, ɛt alcuni pettinati, ɛt lubrici, alcuni irſuti, ɛ rabbuffati cωnωſciamω; tra i quali, i pettinati, ɛ lj'irſuti ſωnω quelli, che kiamiamω grandi, i lubrici poi, ɛt i rabbuffati ſωnω quelli, la cui riſωnanza è ſuperflua; perciò, che sì cωme ne le grande opere alcune ſωnω opere di magnanimità, altre di fumω, ne le quali avɛgna, che cωsì diſωpravia paja un cɛrtω aſcɛndere, a chi però cωn buona ragiωne esse cωnſidera, nωn aſcɛndere, ma più toſtω ruina per alti precipizii

ɛssere giudicherà; cωnciò sia, che la limitata linea de la virtù si trappassi. Guarda adunque Lettωre, quantω per ∫cɛlgere le ɛgrɛgie parole, ti sia biſognω di crivellare; perciò, che se tu cωnsideri il vωlgare Illustre, il quale i pωɛti vωlgari, che nωi vωljamω ammaestrare, dennω (cωme disωpra si è dettω) tragicamente uſare, haverai cura, che sωlamente i nωbilissimi vωcabωli, nel tuω crivɛllω rimanganω; nel numerω de i quali, né i puerili, per la lωrω simplicità, cωm'è *Mamma*, ɛ *Babbω*, *mate*, ɛ *pate*, per niun modω pωtrai cωllωcare; né anchω i feminili, per la lωrω mωlleza, cωme è *dωlciada*, ɛ *placevωle*, né i cωntadineschi per la lωrω austerità, cωme è *grɛgia*, ɛ *cetra*; né i cittadineschi, che sωnω lubrichi, ɛ rabbuffati, cωm'è *fɛmina*, ɛ *corpω*, vi si dennω pωrre; Sωlamente adunque i cittadineschi pettinati, ɛt irsuti, vedrai, che ti rɛstinω; i quali sωnω nωbilissimi, ɛ sωnω mɛmbra del vωlgare illustre. Nωi kiamiamω pettinati, quelli vωcabωli, che sωnω trisyllabi, o verω vicinissimi al trisyllabω, ɛ che sωnω sɛnza aspiraziωne, sɛnza accɛntω acutω, o verω circunflɛxω, sɛnza z, né x duplici, sɛnza geminaziωne di due liquide, ɛ sɛnza pωſiziωne, in cui la muta sia immediatamente pωsposta, ɛ che fannω cωlui, che parla quaſi [fωsserω stati levigati] cωn cɛrta suavità rimanere, cωme è, *Amωre*, *Dωnna*, *Diſiω*, *Virtute*, *Dωnare*, *Letizia*, *Salute*, *Securitate*, *Difeſa*. Irsute poi, dicemω tutte quelle parole, che oltra queste sωnω, o necessarie al parlare Illustre, o ωrnative di essω; ɛ necessarie kiamiamω quelle, che nωn pωssemω cambiare; cωme sωnω alcune mωnωsyllabe, cioè, *no mɛ tɛ sɛ*, *a ɛ i o u*; ɛ le interiɛziωni, ɛt altre mωlte. ωrnative poi dicemω tutte quelle di mωlte syllabe, le quali mescωlate' cωn le pettinate fannω una bɛlla harmωnia ne la struttura, quantunque' habbianω asperità di aspiraziωni, di accɛntω, ɛ di duplici, ɛ di liquide, ɛ di lungheza; cωme è *tɛrra*, *hωnωre*, *speranza*, *gravitate*, *alleviatω*, *impωssibilitate*, *bɛnaventuratissimω*, *aventuratissimamente*, *disaventuratissimamente*, *sωvramagnificentissimamente*, il quale vωcabωlω è ɛndecasyllabω. Pωtrebbesi anchωra trωvare un vωcabωlω, o verω parola di più syllabe; ma perché elji passerɛbbe la capacità di tutti i nostri vɛrsi, però a la preſɛnte ragiωne nωn pare ωppωrtunω; cωme è *hωnωrificabilitudinitate*, il quale in vulgare per dωdeci syllabe si cωmpie, ɛt in grammatica, per tredeci, in dui ωbliqui però. In che modω poi le pettinate sianω da ɛssere ne i vɛrsi cωn queste irsute harmωnizate, laſciɛremω ad insegnarsi disωttω. ɛ questω, che si è dettω de la alteza de i vωcabωli, ad ogni gentil discreziωne sarà bastante'.

Che coſa è Canzωne.

CAP. VIII

Hora preparate le legne e le funi, è tεmpω da legare il faʃciω; ma perché la cωgniziωne di ciascuna opera dεe precεdere a la ωperaziωne, la quale è cωme segnω avanti il trarre de la sagitta, o verω del dardω; però prima, ε principalmente veggiamω qual sia questω faʃciω, che vωlemω legare'. Questω faʃciω adunque (se bεne si ricωrdiamω tutte le coʃe trattate) è la canzωne; ε però veggiamω, che coʃa sia canzωne, ε che' coʃa intendemω quandω dicemω canzωne. La canzωne adunque, secωndω la vera significaziωne del suω nωme, è essa aziωne, o verω passiωne del cantare; sì cωme la leziωne, è la passiωne, o verω aziωne del leggere; ma dikiariamω quellω, che si è dettω, cioè se questa si kiama canzωne in quantω ella sia aziωne, o in quantω passiωne del cantare. Circa la qual coʃa è da cωnʃiderare, che la canzωne si può prεndere in dui modi; l'unω de li quali modi è, secωndω che ella è fabricata dal suω autωre; ε cωsì è aziωne; ε secωndω questω modω Virgiliω nel primω de' la Enεida dice'; *Iω cantω l'arme, e l'homω*. L'altrω modω è, secωndω il quale ella dapoi, che è fabricata, si prωferiʃce, o da lω autωre, o da chi che sia, o cωn suonω, o sεnza; ε cωsì è passiωne. ε perché alhora da altri è fatta, εt hora in altri fa, ε cωsì alhora aziωne, εt hora passiωne εssere si vede. Ma cωnciò sia, che essa è prima fatta, ε poi faccia; però più tostω, anzi al tuttω par che si debbia nωminare da quellω, che ella è fatta, ε da quellω, ch'ella è aziωne di alcunω, chε da quellω, ch'ella faccia in altri. εt il segnω di questω è, che nωi nωn dicemω mai «Questa canzωne è di Piεrω», perché essω la prωferisca, ma perché essω l'habbia fatta. ωltre di questω è da vedere se si dice canzωne la fabricaziωne' de le parole harmωnizate, o verω εssa mωdulaziωne, o cantω; a che dicemω, che mai il cantω nωn si kiama canzωne, ma o suonω, o tωnω, o nota, o melωdia; ε niunω trωmbetta, o ωrganista, o citarεdω kiama il cantω suω canzωne, senωn in quantω sia accωmpagnatω a qualche canzωne'; ma quelli, che cωmpongωnω parole harmωnizate, kiamanω le opere sue canzωni; εt anchωra, che tali parole sianω scritte in carte, ε sεnza niunω, che le prωferisca, si kiamanω canzωni; ε però nωn pare, che la canzωne sia altrω, che una cωmpiuta azione di cωlui, che detta parole harmωnizate, εt atte al cantω. La ωnde cωsì le canzωni, che hora trattiamω, cωme le ballate, ε sωnεtti, ε tutte le parole a qualunque modω harmωnizate, o vωlgarmente, o regularmente dicemω εssere canzωni; ma perciò, che sωlamente trattiamω le coʃe vωlgari, però laʃciandω le regωlate da parte, dicemω; che de i pωεmi vωlgari unω ce n'è suppεmω, il quale per sωpra εxcellenzia kiamiamω canzωne; ε che la canzωne sia una coʃa suppεma nel tεrzω capitωlω di questω libεω è prωvatω; ma cωnciò sia, che questω, che è diffinitω paja generale a molti, però resumendω dettω vωcabωlω generale, che già è diffinitω, distinguiamω per cεrte differεnzie', quellω, che sωlamente cerchiamω. Dicemω adunque, che la canzωne, la quale nωi cerchiamω, in

quantω, che per sωpra εxcellenzia è detta canzωne, è una cωngiugaziωne tragica di stanzie εquali sεnza rispωnsoriω, chε tεndenω ad una sentεnzia, cωme noi dimωstriamω quandω dicemmω, *Dωnne, che havete intellεttω d'Amωre'*. Nωi poi dicemω, ch'ella è una Tragica cωngiugaziωne; perciò, che' quandω tal cωngiugaziωne si fa comicamente, alhora la kiamiamω per diminuziωne Cantilεna, de la quale nel quartω librω di questω, havemω in animω di trattare'.

E cωsì è manifestω, che coʃa sia canzωne, ε secωndω, che generalmente si prεnde, ε secωndω, che per sωpra εxcellεnzia la kiamiamω. εt assai anchωra pare manifεstω, che coʃa nωi intendemω quandω dicemω canzωne; ε cωnsequεntemente qual sia quel faʃciω, che vωljamω legare.

Che coʃa è stanzia ne la canzωne.
CAP. IX

Essεndω la canzωne una cωngiugaziωne di stanzie, ε nωn sapεndωsi, che coʃa sia stanzia, segue di necessità, che nωn si sappia anchωra, che coʃa sia canzωne; perciò, che da la cωgniziωne de le coʃe, che diffiniscωnω, resulta anchωra la cωgniziωne de la coʃa diffinita; ε però cωnsequentemente è da trattare de la stanzia, acciò che investighiamω, che coʃa essa si sia, ε quellω, che per essa vωlemω intεndere. Hora circa questω è da sapere, che tale vωcabωlω è statω per rispettω de l'arte sωla ritrωvatω; cioè, perché quellω si dica stanzia, nel quale, tutta l'arte de' la Canzωne è cωntenuta; ε questa è la stanza capace', o verω il recettacωlω di tutta l'arte; perciò, che sì cωme' la Canzωne è il grεmbω di tutta la sentεnzia, cωsì la stanzia riceve in grεmbω tutta l'arte; né è lecitω di arrωgare alcuna coʃa de arte a le stanzie' sequεnti; ma sωlamente si vestenω de l'arte de la prima; il perché è manifεstω, che' essa stanzia (de la qual parliamω) sarà un tεrmine, o verω una cωmpagine di tutte quelle coʃe, che la canzωne riceve da l'arte; le quali dikiarite, il descrivere, che cerchiamω, sarà manifεstω. Tutta l'arte adunque de' la canzωne pare, che circa tre coʃe cωnsista; de le quali, la prima è circa la diviʃiωne del cantω, l'altra circa la habitudine de le parti, la tεrza circa il numerω de i vεrsi, ε de le syllabe; de le rime poi, nωn facemω menziωne alcuna; perciò, che nωn sωnω de la propria arte de la canzωne'; è lecitω cεrtamente in cadauna stanzia innovare le rime, ε quelle medeʃime a suω piacere replicare; il che se la rima fωsse di propria arte de la Canzωne, lecitω nωn sarεbbe, ε se pure accade qualche coʃa de le rime servare, l'arte di questω ivi si cωntiεne, quandω dicemω de la habitudine de le parti. Il perché cωsì pωssiamω raccolgere da le coʃe predette, ε diffinire, dicεndω: La stanzia è una cωmpagine di vεrsi, ε di syllabe', sωttω un cεrtω cantω, ε sωttω una cεrta habitudine limitata.

Del cantω de le stanzie, ε de la diviſiωne di essω.
CAP. X

Sapεndω poi, che l'animale raziωnale è homω, ε che la sensibile anima, εt il corpω è animale, e nωn sapεndω, che coſa si sia questa anima, né questω corpω, nωn possemω havere perfεtta cωgniziωne de l'homω; perciò, che la perfεtta cωgniziωne di ciascuna coſa tεrmina ne lj ultimi εlementi, sì cωme il maestrω di cωlωrω che sannω, nel principiω de la sua *Phiſica* afferma. Adunque per havere la cωgniziωne de la canzωne, che deſideriamω, cωnſideriamω al preſεnte sωttω brevità quelle coſe, che difiniscanω il difiniεnte di lεi; ε prima del cantω, dapoi de la habitudine, εt poſcia de i vεrsi, ε de le syllabe investighiamω. Dicemω adunque, che' ogni stanzia è harmωnizata a ricever una cεrta oda, o verω cantω; ma pajωnω εsser fatte in modω divεrse, che alcune sωttω una oda cωntinua finω al 'ultimω prωcεdenω, cioè sεnza replicaziωne di alcuna mωdulaziωne, ε sεnza diviſiωne; ε dicemω diviſiωne quella coſa, che fa vωltare di una oda in un'altra; la quale quandω parliamω cωl vulgω kiamiamω volta; ε queste stanzie di una oda sωla, Arnaldω Daniεllω uſò quaſi in tutte le sue canzωni; ε nωi havemω essω seguitatω quandω dicemmω, *Al pocω giωrnω, εt al gran cerkiω d'ωmbra*.

Alcune altre stanzie sωnω poi, che patiscωnω diviſiωne; ε questa diviſiωne nωn può εssere nel modω, che la kiamiamω, se nωn si fa replicaziωne di una oda, o d'avanti la diviſiωne, o dapoi, o da tutte due le parti, cioè d'avanti, ε dapoi. ε se la repetiziωn de l'oda si fa avanti la diviſiωne, dicemω, che la stanzia ha piεdi; la quale ne dεe' havere dui; avεgna, che qualche volta se ne faccianω tre, ma mωltω di radω. Se poi essa repetiziωn di oda si fa dωpω la diviſiωme, dicemω la stanzia haver vεrsi. Ma se la repetiziωn nωn si fa avanti la diviſiωn, dicemω la stanzia haver frωnte; ε se essa nωn si fa dapoi, la dicemω haver sirima, over cωda. Guarda adunque lettωre quanta licεnzia sia data a li pωεti, che fannω canzωni, ε cωnsidera per che cagiωne la uſanza si habbia assuntω sì largω arbitriω; ε se la ragiωne ti guiderà per drittω calle, vederai, che per la sωla dignità de l'autωrità εssere assai manifεstω, a che' modω l'arte de le Canzωni cωnsista circa la diviſiωne del cantω, ε però andiamω a la habitudine de le parti.

De la habitudine de le parti de la stanzia.
CAP. XI

A nωi pare, che questa, che kiamiamω habitudine, sia grandissima parte di quellω, che è de l'arte; perciò, che essa circa la diviſiωne del cantω, ε circa il cωntεxtω de i vεrsi, ε circa la relaziωne de le rime cωnsiste; il perché appare, che

sia da ɛssere diligentissimamente trattata. Dicemω adunque, che la frωnte cω i vɛrsi, ɛt i piɛdi cωn la sirima o verω cωda, ɛ parimente i piɛdi cω i vɛrsi possωnω diverſamente ne la stanzia ritrωvarsi; perciò, che alcuna fiata la frωnte ɛxciɛde i vɛrsi, o verω può ɛxciɛdere di syllabe, ɛ di numerω di vɛrsi; ɛ dicω può, perciò, che mai tale habitudine nωn havemω veduta; alcune fiate a frωnte può avanzare' i vɛrsi nel numerω de i vɛrsi, ɛt ɛssere da essi vɛrsi nel mumerω de le syllabe vanzata; cωme se la frωnte fωsse di cinque vɛrsi, ɛ ciascunω de i vɛrsi fωsse di dωi vɛrsi, ɛt i vɛrsi de la frωnte fωssenω di sɛtte syllabe, ɛ quelli de i vɛrsi fωssenω di undeci syllabe. Alcun'altra volta i vɛrsi avanzanω la frωnte di numerω di vɛrsi, ɛ di syllabe, cωme in quella, che nωi dicemmω, *Tragemi de la mente Amωr la stiva*, ωve la frωnte fu di tre ɛndecasyllabi, ɛ di unω ɛptasyllabω cωntexta; la quale nωn si può dividere in piɛdi; cωnciò sia, che i piɛdi voljanω ɛssere fra sé ɛquali di numerω di vɛrsi, ɛ di numerω di syllabe, cωme voljωnω ɛssere fra sé anchωra i vɛrsi; Ma sì cωme dicemω, che i vɛrsi avanzanω di numerω di vɛrsi, ɛ di syllabe la frωnte, cωsì si può dire, che la frωnte in tutte due queste coſe può avanzare i vɛrsi; cωme quandω ciascunω de i vɛrsi fωsse di dui vɛrsi ɛptasyllabi, ɛ la frωnte fωsse di cinque vɛrsi, cioè di dui ɛndecasyllabi, ɛ di tre ɛptasyllabi cωntɛxta; alcune volte poi i piɛdi avanzanω la Sirima di vɛrsi, ɛ di syllabe, cωme in quella, che dicemmω, *Amωr, che muovi tua virtù dal Ciɛlω*. ɛt alcuna volta i piɛdi sωnω in tuttω da la Sirima avanzati; cωme in quella, che dicemmω, *Dωnna piɛtωſa, ɛ di nωvɛlla ɛtate*.

E sì cωme dicemω, che la frωnte può vincere di vɛrsi, ɛt ɛssere vinta di syllabe, ɛt al cωntrariω; cωsì dicemω la Sirima. I piɛdi anchωra ponnω di numɛrω avanzare i vɛrsi, ɛt ɛssere da essi avanzati; perciò, che ne la stanzia possωnω ɛssere tre piɛdi, ɛ dui vɛrsi; ɛ dui piɛdi, ɛ tre vɛrsi; né questω è limitatω, che nωn si possanω più piɛdi, ɛ più vɛrsi tɛssere insiɛme. ɛ sì cωme havemω dettω ne l'altre coſe de lω avanzare' de i vɛrsi, ɛ de le syllabe, cωsì de i piɛdi, ɛ de i vɛrsi dicemω, i quali nel medeſimω modω possωnω vincere, ɛt ɛssere vinti. Né è da laſciar da parte, che nωi piljamω i piɛdi al cωntrariω di quellω, che fannω i pωɛti regulati; perciò, che essi fannω il vɛrsω di piɛdi, ɛ nωi dicemω farsi i piɛdi di vɛrsi; cωme assai kiaramente appare. Né è da laſciar da parte, che di nuovω nωn affermiamω, che i piɛdi di necessità piljanω l'unω da l'altrω la habitudine, ɛt ɛqualità di vɛrsi, ɛ di syllabe; perciò, che altramente nωn si pωtrɛbbe fare repetiziωn di cantω. ɛ questω medeſimω affermω dωvɛrsi servare ne i vɛrsi.

De la qualità de i vɛrsi, che ne la stanzia si pongωnω.

CAP. XII

Ecci anchωra (cωme disωpra si è dettω) una cεrta habitudine, la quale' quandω tessemω i vεrsi devemω cωnsiderare; ma acciò, che di quella cωn ragiωne trattiamω, repetiamω quellω, che disωpra havemω dettω de i vεrsi; cioè, che nel uʃω nostrω par, che habbia prerωgativa di εssere frequentatω lω εndecasyllabω, lω εptasyllabω, εt il pεntasyllabω, ε questi sωpra lj altri dωvεrsi seguitare affirmiamω. Di questi adunque, quandω vωlemω far pωεmi tragici, lω εndecasyllabω per una cεrta εxcellεnzia, che ha nel cωntεxere, mεrita privilεgiω di vincere; e però alcune stanzie sωnω, che di sωli εndecasyllabi sωnω cωntεxte, cωme quella di Guidω da Fiωrεnza, *Donna mi priεga, perch'iω voljω dire'*. εt anchωra nωi dicemω, *Donne, che havete intellettω d'amωre'*. Questω anchωra i spagnuoli hannω uʃatω, ε dicω i spagnuoli, che hannω fattω pωεmi nel vωlgare *oc*. Amerigω de Belmi, *Nuls bon nωn pot cωmplir adrettiamen*

Altre stanzie sωnω, ne le quali unω sωlω εptasyllabω si tεsse; ε questω nωn può εssere, senωn ωve è frωnte, over sirima; perciò, che (cωme si è dettω) ne i piεdi, ε ne i vεrsi si ricεrca εqualità di vεrsi, ε di syllabe'. Il perché anchωra appare, che il numerω disparω de i vεrsi, nωn può εsser, senωn frωnte, o cωda; bεnché in esse a suω piacere si può uʃare parω, o disparω numerω di vεrsi; ε cωsì cωme alcuna stanzia è di unω sωlω εptasyllabω fωrmata, cωsì appare, che cωn dωi, tre, ε quattrω si possa fωrmare; pur che nel tragicω vinca lω εndecasyllabω, ε da essω εndecasyllabω si cωminci. Benché havemω ritrωvati alcuni, che nel tragicω hannω da lω εptasyllabω cωminciatω; cioè Guidω Guinizelli, guidω de i Ghisliεri, ε Fabriziω Bωlωgneʃi: *Di fermω sωfferire'*, ε *Donna lω fermω cuore'*, ε *Lω miω lωntanω gire"*, εt alcuni altri. Ma se al sεnsω di queste canzωni vωrremω sωttilmente intrare, apparerà tale tragεdia nωn prωcεdere sεnza qualche ωmbra di εlegia. Del pεntasyllabω poi nωn cωncedemω a questω modω; perciò, che in un dettatω grande basta in tutta la stanzia inserirvi un pεntasyllabω, over dui al più, ne i piεdi; ε dicω nε i piεdi, per la necessità, cωn la quale i piεdi, εt i vεrsi si cantanω; ma bεn nωn pare, che nel tragicω si deggia prεndere il trisyllabω, che per sé stia; ε dicω, che per sé stia, perciò, che per una cεrta repercussiωne di rime pare, che frequεntemente si uʃi; cωme si può vedere in quella canzωne di Guidω Fiωrentinω: *Donna mi priεga, per ch'iω voljω dire'*. εt in quella, che nωi dicemω: *Poʃcia, che amωr del tuttω m'ha laʃciatω*. Né ivi è per sé in tuttω vεrsω, ma è parte de lω εndecasyllabω, che sωlamente a la rima del precedεnte vεrsω, a guiʃa di Echω rispωnde'.

E questω anchωra principalmente è da curare circa la dispωʃiziωne de i vεrsi, che se unω εptasyllabω si inseriʃce nel primω piεde, che quel medeʃimω locω, che ivi pilja per suω, dεe anchωra piljare ne l'altrω; verbi grazia, se 'l piè di tre

vɛrsi ha il primω, ɛt ultimω vɛrsω ɛndecasyllabω, ɛ di mɛçω, cioè il secωndω, ɛptasyllabω, cωsì il secωndω piè dɛe havere li ɛxtrɛmi ɛndecaʃyllabi, ɛt il mɛçω ɛptasyllabω; perciò, che altrimente standω, nωn si pωtrɛbbe fare la geminaziωn del cantω; per uʃω del quale si fannω i pidiɛ; cωme si è dettω; ɛ cωnsequωɛntemente nωn pωtrɛbbωnω ɛssere piɛdi; ɛ quellω, ch'iω dicω de i piɛdi, dicω parimente de i vɛrsi; perciò, che in niuna coʃa vedemω i piɛdi avanti la diviʃiωne de la stanzia, ma i vɛrsi dωpω essa diviʃiωne si pongωnω. ɛ anchωra sì cωme si dɛe fare ne i piɛdi di tre vɛrsi, cωsì dicω dωvɛrsi fare in tutti lj altri piɛdi. ɛ quellω, che si è dettω di unω ɛptasyllabω, dicemω parimente di dui, ɛ di più, ɛ del pɛntasyllabω, ɛ di ciascun altrω vɛrsω. E quinci tu puoi assai sufficiɛntemente cωnωʃcere, o Lettωre, cωme tu dɛi disponere, o verω habituare la stanzia; perciò, che la habitudine pare', che sia da cωnsiderare circa i vɛrsi.

De la habitudine de le rime, che ne la stanzia si uʃanω.
CAP. XIII

Trattiamω anchωra de la relaziωne de le rime; nωn trattandω però alcuna coʃa al preʃɛnte de la ɛssɛnzia lωrω; perciò, che il propriω trattatω di esse riʃerbiamω quandω de i mediocri pωɛmi diremω. Ma nel principiω di questω capitωlω ci pare di kiarire alcune coʃe di esse; de le quali una è, che sωnω alcune stanzie, ne le quali nωn si guarda a niuna habitudine di rime, ɛ tali stanzie ha uʃatω frequentissimamente Arnaldω Daniɛllω, cωme ivi, *Sem fωs Amωr de gior dωnar*. ɛ nωi dicemmω, *Al pocω giωrnω, ɛt al gran cerchiω d'ωmbra*. L'altra coʃa è, che alcune stanzie hannω tutti i vɛrʃi di una medeʃima rima, ne le quali è superfluω cercare habitudine alcuna; ɛ cωsì rɛsta, che circa le rime mescωlate sωlamente debbiamω insistere; in che è da sapere', che quaʃi tutti i pωɛti si hannω in ciò grandissima licɛnzia tolta; cωnciò sia, che quinci la dωlceza de l'harmωnia maximamente risulta. Sωnω adunque alcuni, i quali in una istessa stanzia, nωn accordanω tutte le deʃinɛnzie de i vɛrsi; ma alcune di esse, ne le altre stanzie repetiscωnω, o veramente accordanω; cωme fu Gottω Mantuanω, il quale fin qui ci ha mωlte sue bone canzωni intimatω. Cωstui sɛmpre tesseva, ne la stanzia un vɛrʃω scωmpagnatω, il quale essω nωminava kiave; ɛ cωme di unω, cωsì è lecitω di dui, ɛ forse di più; alcuni altri poi sωnω, ɛ quaʃi tutti i trωvatωri di canzωni, che ne la stanzia mai nωn laʃcianω alcun vɛrsω scωmpagnatω, al quale la cωnʃωnanzia di una, o di più rime nωn rispωnda; alcuni poʃcia fannω le rime de i vɛrsi, che sωnω avanti la diviʃiωne', divɛrse da quelle de i vɛrsi, che sωnω dωpω essa; et altri nωn lω fannω, ma le deʃinɛnzie de la prima parte de la stanzia, anchωra ne la secωnda inseriscωnω; Nωn di menω, questω spessissime volte si fa, che cωn l'ultimω vɛrsω de la prima parte, il primω de la secωnda

parte ne le deſinenzie s’accωrda, il che nωn pare εssere altrω, che una cεrta bεlla cωncatenaziωne di essa stanzia. La habitudine poi de le rime, che sωnω ne la frωnte, ε ne la sirima è sì ampla, che ‘l pare, che ogni atta licεnzia sia da cωncεdere a ciascunω; ma nωn di menω le deſinεnzie de lj’ultimi vεrsi sωnω bellissime, se in rime accωrdare si kiudenω; il che però è da schiffare ne i piεdi, ne i quali ritrωviamω εssersi una cεrta habitudine servata; la quale’ dividεndω, dicemω, che ‘l primω piè di vεrsi pari, o dispari si fa; ε l’unω, ε l’altrω può εssere di deſinεnzie accωmpagnate, o scωmpagnate; il che’ ne ‘l piè di vεrsi pari nωn è dubbiω; ma se alcunω dubitasse in quellω di dispari, ricordisi di ciò, che havemω dettω nel capitωlω disωpra del trisyllabω, quandω εssεndω parte de lω εndecasyllabω, cωme Echω rispωnde; ε se la deſinεnzia de la rima in un de i piεdi è sωla, biſogna al tuttω accωmpagnarla ne l’altrω; ma se in un piεde ciascuna de le rime è accωmpagnata, si può ne l’altrω, o quelle ripεtere, o farne di nuove, o tutte, o parte, secωndo, che a l’hom piace, pur che in tuttω si sεrve l’ωrdine del precedente; vεrbigrazia, se nel primω piè di tre vεrsi, le ultime desinεnzie s’accωrdanω cωn le prime, cωsì biſogna accωrdarvisi quelle del secωndω, ε se quella di mεçω nel primω piè è accωmpagnata, o scωmpagnata; cωsì parimente sia quella di mεçω nel secωndω piè; ε questω è da fare’ parimente in tutte le altre sorti di piεdi; ε ne i vεrsi anchωra quaſi sεmpre è da serbare questa legge; ε quaſi sεmpre, dicω; perciò, che per la prenωminata cωncatenaziωne, ε per la prεdetta geminaziωne de le ultime deſinεnzie, a le volte accade il dettω ωrdine mutarsi. ωltre di questω, ci pare cωnvenevωle coſa, aggiungere a questω capitωlω, quelle coſe, che’ ne le rime si dennω schifare; cωnciò sia, che in questω librω nωn vωljamω altrω, chε quellω, che qui si dirà de la dωttrina de le rime tωccare. Adunque sωnω tre coſe, che circa la pωſiziωne di rime, nωn si dennω frequentare da chi cωmpωne Illustri pωεmi, l’una è la troppa repetiziωne di una rima, salvω, che qualche coſa nuova, εt intentata de l’arte ciò nωn si assuma; cωme il giωrnω de la naſcεnte milizia, il quale si sdegna laſciar passare la sua giωrnata sεnza alcuna prerωgativa. Questω pare, che’ nωi habbiamω fattω ivi, *Amωr tu vedi bεn, che questa Donna*.

La secωnda è la inutile εquivωcaziωne, la qual sεmpre pare, che tolja qualche coſa a la sentεnzia, ε la tεrza è l’asperità de le rime, salvω, che le nωn sianω cωn le molle mescωlate; perciò, che per la meſcωlanza de le rime aspere, ε de le molle, la tragεdia riceve splendωre, ε questω de l’arte, quantω a la habitudine si ricerca, a bastanza sarà.

Del numerω de i vεrsi, ε de le syllabe de la stanzia.

CAP. XIV

Havɛndω quellω, che è de l’arte de la canzωne assai sufficiɛntemente trattatω, hora tratteremω del tɛrzω, cioè del numɛrω de i vɛrsi, ε de le syllabe. ε prima alcune coʃe si biʃognanω vedere, secωndω tutta la instanzia, ɛt altre sωnω da dividere, le quali poi secωndω le parti lωrω vederemω; a nωi adunque prima s’appartiɛne fare separaziωne di quelle coʃe, che ci ωccωrrenω da cantare; perciò, che alcune stanzie amanω la lωngheza, ɛt altre no; cωnciò sia, che tutte le coʃe, che cantiamω, o circa il dɛstrω, o circa il sinistrω si canta; cioè, che alcuna volta accade suadɛndω, alcuna volta dissuadɛndω cantare, ɛt alcuna volta allegrandωsi, alcuna volta cωn irωnia, alcuna volta in laude, ɛt altra in vitupɛriω dire’. ε però le parole, che sωnω circa le coʃe sinistre, vadanω sɛmpre cωn fretta vɛrsω la fine, le altre poi, cωn lωngheza cωndecɛnte vadanω passω passω vɛrsω l’ɛxtrɛmω...

IL DE MONARCHIA

Il De Monarchia è un trattato in latino.Con questo testo il poeta volle intervenire in uno dei temi più “caldi” della sua epoca: il rapporto tra l’autorità laica (rappresentata dall’imperatore) e l’autorità religiosa (rappresentata dal papa). Ormai è noto quale fosse il punto di vista di Dante su questo problema, poiché durante la sua attività politica egli aveva lottato per difendere l’autonomia del Comune fiorentino dalle pretese temporali di papa Bonifacio VIII.

Secondo la cronologia più accreditata, il De Monarchia fu composto negli anni 1312-13, cioè al tempo della discesa di Enrico VII di Lussemburgo in Italia; secondo altri, bisognerebbe anticipare almeno al 1308 la data di composizione; altri ancora, infine, posticipano la composizione del trattato al 1318, pochi anni prima della morte dell’autore (1321).

L’opera si articola in tre libri, ma il più importante è sicuramente il terzo, quello in cui Dante affronta più espressamente il tema dei rapporti tra il papa e l’imperatore. Dante, anzitutto, condanna la concezione ierocratica del potere elaborata dalla Chiesa romana e solennemente ribadita attraverso la bolla Unam Sanctam del 1302. La concezione teocratica assegnava la pienezza dei poteri al papa, la cui autorità era superiore anche a quella dell’imperatore: questo significava che il papa era legittimato ad intervenire anche negli affari che di norma competevano all’autorità laica. A questa concezione teocratica Dante oppone l’idea che l’uomo persegue essenzialmente due fini: la felicità della vita terrena e quella della vita eterna. Mentre al papa spetta la conduzione degli uomini alla vita eterna (in cui Dante riconosce comunque il fine più alto), all’imperatore spetta, invece, il compito di guidarli alla felicità terrena. Ne deriva perciò l’autonomia della sfera temporale, di competenza dell’imperatore, rispetto alla sfera spirituale, di competenza del papa. L’autorità del pontefice non deve influenzare quella dell’imperatore nello svolgimento dei suoi compiti.

Papa Bonifacio VIII

INDICE

LIBER PRIMUS
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LIBER PRIMUS

I. 1. Omnium hominum quos ad amorem veritatis natura superior impressit hoc maxime interesse videtur: ut, quemadmodum de labore antiquorum ditati sunt, ita et ipsi posteris prolaborent, quatenus ab eis posteritas habeat quo ditetur. 2. Longe nanque ab offitio se esse non dubitet qui, publicis documentis imbutus, ad rem publicam aliquid afferre non curat; non enim est lignum, quod secus decursus aquarum fructificat in tempore suo, sed potius perniciosa vorago semper ingurgitans et nunquam ingurgitata refundens. 3. Hec igitur sepe mecum recogitans, ne de infossi talenti culpa quandoque redarguar, publice utilitati non modo turgescere, quinymo fructificare desidero, et intemptatas ab aliis estendere veritates. 4. Nam quem fructum ille qui theorema quoddam Euclidis iterum demonstraret? qui ab Aristotile felicitatem ostensam reostendere conaretur? qui senectutem a Cicerone defensam resummeret defensandam? Nullum quippe, sed fastidium potius illa superfluitas tediosa prestaret. 5. Cumque, inter alias veritates occultas et utiles, temporalis Monarchie notitia utilissima sit et maxime latens et, propter non se habere immediate ad lucrum, ab omnibus intemptata, in proposito est hanc de suis enucleare latibulis, tum ut utiliter mundo pervigilem, tum etiam ut palmam tanti bravii primus in meam gloriam adipiscar. 6. Arduum quidem opus et ultra vires aggredior, non tam de propria virtute confidens, quam de lumine Largitoris illius “qui dat omnibus affluenter et non improperat”.

II. 1. Primum quidem igitur videndum quid est quod ‘temporalis Monarchia’ dicitur, typo ut dicam et secundum intentionem. 2. Est ergo temporalis Monarchia, quam dicunt ‘Imperium’, unicus principatus et super omnes in tempore vel in hiis et super hiis que tempore mensurantur. 3. Maxime autem de hac tria dubitata queruntur: primo nanque dubitatur et queritur an ad bene esse mundi necessaria sit; secundo an romanus populus de iure Monarche offitium sibi asciverit; et tertio an auctoritas Monarche dependeat a Deo inmediate vel ab alio, Dei ministro seu vicario. 4. Verum, quia omnis veritas que non est principium ex veritate alicuius principii fit manifesta, necesse est in qualibet inquisitione habere notitiam de principio, in quod analetice recurratur pro certitudine omnium propositionum que inferius assummuntur. Et quia presens tractatus est inquisitio quedam, ante omnia de principio scruptandum esse videtur in cuius virtute inferiora consistant. 5. Est ergo sciendum quod quedam sunt que, nostre potestati minime subiacentia, speculari tantummodo possumus, operari autem non: velut mathematica, physica et divina; quedam vero sunt que, nostre potestati subiacentia, non solum speculari sed etiam operari possumus: et in hiis non operatio propter speculationem, sed hec propter illam assummitur,

quoniam in talibus operatio finis. 6. Cum ergo materia presens politica sit, ymo fons atque principium rectarum politiarum, et omne politicum nostre potestati subiacet, manifestum est quod materia presens non ad speculationem per prius, sed ad operationem ordinatur. 7. Rursus, cum in operabilibus principium et causa omnium sit ultimus finis — movet enim primo agentem — , consequens est ut omnis ratio eorum que sunt ad finem ab ipso fine summatur. Nam alia erit ratio incidendi lignum propter domum constituendam, et alia propter navim. 8. Illud igitur, siquid est, quod est finis universalis civilitatis humani generis, erit hic principium per quod omnia que inferius probanda sunt erunt manifesta sufficienter: esse autem finem huius civilitatis et illius, et non esse unum omnium finem arbitrari stultum est.

III. 1. Nunc autem videndum est quid sit finis totius humane civilitatis: quo viso, plus quam dimidium laboris erit transactum, iuxta Phylosophum ad Nicomacum. 2. Et ad evidentiam eius quod queritur advertendum quod, quemadmodum est finis aliquis ad quem natura producit pollicem, et alius ab hoc ad quem manum totam, et rursus alius ab utroque ad quem brachium, aliusque ab omnibus ad quem totum hominem; sic alius est finis ad quem singularem hominem, alius ad quem ordinat domesticam comunitatem, alius ad quem viciniam, et alius ad quem civitatem, et alius ad quem regnum, et denique optimus ad quem universaliter genus humanum Deus ecternus arte sua, que natura est, in esse producit. Et hoc queritur hic tanquam principium inquisitionis directivum. 3. Propter quod sciendum primo quod Deus et natura nil otiosum facit, sed quicquid prodit in esse est ad aliquam operationem. Non enim essentia ulla creata ultimus finis est in intentione creantis, in quantum creans, sed propria essentie operatio: unde est quod non operatio propria propter essentiam, sed hec propter illam habet ut sit. 4. Est ergo aliqua propria operatio humane universitatis, ad quam ipsa universitas hominum in tanta moltitudine ordinatur; ad quam quidem operationem nec homo unus, nec domus una, nec una vicinia, nec una civitas, nec regnum particulare pertingere potest. Que autem sit illa, manifestum fiet si ultimum de potentia totius humanitatis appareat. 5. Dico ergo quod nulla vis a pluribus spetie diversis partecipata ultimum est de potentia alicuius illorum; quia, cum illud quod est ultimum tale sit constitutivum spetiei, sequeretur quod una essentia pluribus spetiebus esset specificata: quod est inpossibile. 6. Non est ergo vis ultima in homine ipsum esse simpliciter sumptum, quia etiam sic sumptum ab elementis participatur; nec esse complexionatum, quia hoc reperitur in mineralibus; nec esse animatum, quia sic etiam in plantis; nec esse apprehensivum, quia sic etiam participatur a brutis; sed esse apprehensivum per intellectum possibilem: quod quidem esse nulli ab homine alii competit vel supra vel infra. 7. Nam, etsi alie sunt essentie

intellectum participantes, non tamen intellectus earum est possibilis ut hominis, quia essentie tales speties quedam sunt intellectuales et non aliud, et earum esse nichil est aliud quam intelligere quod est quod sunt; quod est sine interpolatione, aliter sempiterne non essent. Patet igitur quod ultimum de potentia ipsius humanitatis est potentia sive virtus intellectiva. 8. Et quia potentia ista per unum hominem seu per aliquam particularium comunitatum superius distinctarum tota simul in actum reduci non potest, necesse est multitudinem esse in humano genere, per quam quidem tota potentia hec actuetur; sicut necesse est multitudinem rerum generabilium ut potentia tota materie prime semper sub actu sit: aliter esset dare potentiam separatam, quod est inpossibile. 9. Et huic sententie concordat Averrois in comento super hiis que De anima. Potentia etiam intellectiva, de qua loquor, non solum est ad formas universales aut speties, sed etiam per quandam extensionem ad particulares: unde solet dici quod intellectus speculativus extensione fit practicus, cuius finis est agere atque facere. 10. Quod dico propter agibilia, que politica prudentia regulantur, et propter factibilia, que regulantur arte: que omnia speculationi ancillantur tanquam optimo ad quod humanum genus Prima Bonitas in esse produxit; ex quo iam innotescit illud Politice: intellectu, scilicet, vigentes aliis naturaliter principari.

IV. 1. Satis igitur declaratum est quod proprium opus humani generis totaliter accepti est actuare semper totam potentiam intellectus possibilis, per prius ad speculandum et secondario propter hoc ad operandum per suam extensionem. 2. Et quia quemadmodum est in parte sic est in toto, et in homine particulari contingit quod sedendo et quiescendo prudentia et sapientia ipse perficitur, patet quod genus humanum in quiete sive tranquillitate pacis ad proprium suum opus, quod fere divinum est iuxta illud “Minuisti eum paulominus ab angelis”, liberrime atque facillime se habet. Unde manifestum est quod pax universalis est optimum eorum que ad nostram beatitudinem ordinantur. 3. Hinc est quod pastoribus de sursum sonuit non divitie, non voluptates, non honores, non longitudo vite, non sanitas, non robur, non pulcritudo, sed pax; inquit enim celestis militia: “Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bone voluntatis”. 4. Hinc etiam “Pax vobis” Salus hominum salutabat; decebat enim summum Salvatorem summam salutationem exprimere: quem quidem morem servare voluerunt discipuli eius et Paulus in salutationibus suis, ut omnibus manifestum esse potest. 5. Ex hiis ergo que declarata sunt patet per quod melius, ymo per quod optime genus humanum pertingit ad opus proprium; et per consequens visum est propinquissimum medium per quod itur in illud ad quod, velut in ultimum finem, omnia nostra opera ordinantur, quia est pax universalis, que pro principio rationum subsequentium supponatur. 6. Quod erat

necessarium, ut dictum fuit, velut signum prefixum in quod quicquid probandum est resolvatur tanquam in manifestissimam veritatem.
V. 1. Resummens igitur quod a principio dicebatur, tria maxime dubitantur et dubitata queruntur circa Monarchiam temporalem, que comuniori vocabulo nuncupatur ‘Imperium’; et de hiis, ut predictum est, propositum est sub assignato principio inquisitionem facere secundum iam tactum ordinem. 2. Itaque prima questio sit: utrum ad bene esse mundi Monarchia temporalis necessaria sit. Hoc equidem, nulla vi rationis vel auctoritatis obstante, potissimis et patentissimis argumentis ostendi potest, quorum primum ab autoritate Phylosophi assummatur de suis Politicis. 3. Asserit enim ibi venerabilis eius autoritas quod, quando aliqua plura ordinantur ad unum, oportet unum eorum regulare seu regere, alia vero regulari seu regi; quod quidem non solum gloriosum nomen autoris facit esse credendum, sed ratio inductiva. 4. Si enim consideremus unum hominem, hoc in eo contingere videbimus, quia, cum omnes vires eius ordinentur ad felicitatem, vis ipsa intellectualis est regulatrix et rectrix omnium aliarum: aliter ad felicitatem pervenire non potest. 5. Si consideremus unam domum, cuius finis est domesticos ad bene vivere preparare, unum oportet esse qui regulet et regat, quem dicunt patremfamilias, vel eius locum tenentem, iuxta dicentem Phylosophum: “Omnis domus regitur a senissimo”; et huius, ut ait Homerus, est regulare omnes et leges imponere aliis. Propter quod proverbialiter dicitur illa maledictio: “Parem habeas in domo”. 6. Si consideremus vicum unum, cuius finis est commoda tam personarum quam rerum auxiliatio, unum oportet esse aliorum regulatorem, vel datum ab alio vel ex ipsis preheminentem consentientibus aliis; aliter ad illam mutuam sufficientiam non solum non pertingitur, sed aliquando, pluribus preheminere volentibus, vicinia tota destruitur. 7. Si vero unam civitatem, cuius finis est bene sufficienterque vivere, unum oportet esse regimen, et hoc non solum in recta politia, sed etiam in obliqua; quod si aliter fiat, non solum finis vite civilis amictitur, sed etiam civitas desinit esse quod erat. 8. Si denique unum regnum particolare, cuius finis est is qui civitatis cum maiori fiducia sue tranquillitatis, oportet esse regem unum qui regat atque gubernet; aliter non modo existentes in regno finem non assecuntur, sed etiam regnum in interitum labitur, iuxta illud infallibilis Veritatis: “Omne regnum in se divisum desolabitur”. 9. Si ergo sic se habet in hiis et in singulis que ad unum aliquod ordinantur, verum est quod assummitur supra; nunc constat quod totum humanum genus ordinatur ad unum, ut iam preostensum fuit: ergo unum oportet esse regulans sive regens, et hoc ‘Monarcha’ sive ‘Imperator’ dici debet. 10. Et sic patet quod ad bene esse mundi necesse est Monarchiam esse sive Imperium.

VI. 1. Et sicut se habet pars ad totum, sic ordo partialis ad totalem. Pars ad totum se habet sicut ad finem et optimum: ergo et ordo in parte ad ordinem in toto, sicut ad finem et optimum. Ex quo habetur quod bonitas ordinis partialis non excedit bonitatem totalis ordinis, sed magis e converso. 2. Cum ergo duplex ordo reperiatur in rebus, ordo scilicet partium inter se, et ordo partium ad aliquod unum quod non est pars, sicut ordo partium exercitus inter se et ordo earum ad ducem, ordo partium ad unum est melior tanquam finis alterius: est enim alter propter hunc, non e converso. 3. Unde si forma huius ordinis reperitur in partibus humane multitudinis, multo magis debet reperiri in ipsa multitudine sive totalitate per vim sillogismi premissi, cum sit ordo melior sive forma ordinis; sed reperitur in omnibus partibus humane multitudinis, ut per ea que dicta sunt in capitulo precedenti satis est manifestum: ergo et in ipsa totalitate reperiri debet. 4. Et sic onmes partes prenotate infra regna et ipsa regna ordinari debent ad unum principem sive principatum, hoc est ad Monarcham sive Monarchiam.

VII. 1. Amplius, humana universitas est quoddam totum ad quasdam partes, et est quedam pars ad quoddam totum. Est enim quoddam totum ad regna particularia et ad gentes, ut superiora ostendunt; et est quedam pars ad totum universum. 2. Et hoc est de se manifestum. Sicut ergo inferiora humane universitatis, bene respondent ad ipsam, sic ipsa ‘bene’ dicitur respondere ad suum totum; partes enim bene respondent ad ipsam per unum principium tantum, ut ex superioribus colligi potest de facili: ergo et ipsa ad ipsum universum sive ad eius principem, qui Deus est et Monarcha, simpliciter bene respondet per unum principium tantum, scilicet unicum principem. 3. Ex quo sequitur Monarchiam necessariam mundo ut bene sit.

VIII. 1. Et omne illud bene se habet et optime quod se habet secundum intentionem primi agentis, qui Deus est; et hoc est per se notum, nisi apud negantes divinam bonitatem actingere summum perfectionis. 2. De intentione Dei est ut omne causatum divinam similitudinem representet in quantum propria natura recipere potest. Propter quod dictum est: “Faciamus hominem ad ymaginem et similitudinem nostram”; quod licet ‘ad ymaginem’ de rebus inferioribus ab homine dici non possit, ‘ad similitudinem’ tamen de qualibet dici potest, cum totum universum nichil aliud sit quam vestigium quoddam divine bonitatis. Ergo humanum genus bene se habet et optime quando, secundum quod potest, Deo assimilatur. 3. Sed genus humanum maxime Deo assimilatur quando maxime est unum: vera enim ratio unius in solo illo est; propter quod scriptum est: “Audi, Israel, Dominus Deus tuus unus est”. 4. Sed tunc genus humanum maxime est unum, quando totum unitur in uno: quod esse non potest nisi quando uni principi totaliter subiacet, ut de se patet. 5. Ergo humanum genus uni principi subiacens maxime Deo assimilatur, et per consequens maxime est secundum

divinam intentionem: quod est bene et optime se habere, ut in principio huius capituli est probatum.

IX. 1. Item, bene et optime se habet omnis filius cum vestigia perfecti patris, in quantum propria natura permictit, ymitatur. Humanum genus filius est celi, quod est perfectissimum in omni opere suo: generat enim homo hominem et sol, iuxta secundum De naturali auditu. Ergo optime se habet humanum genus cum vestigia celi, in quantum propria natura permictit, ymitatur. 2. Et cum celum totum unico motu, scilicet Primi Mobilis, et ab unico motore, qui Deus est, reguletur in omnibus suis partibus, motibus et motoribus, ut phylosophando evidentissime humana ratio deprehendit, si vere sillogizatum est, humanum genus tunc optime se habet, quando ab unico principe tanquam ab unico motore, et unica lege tanquam unico motu, in suis motoribus et motibus reguletur. 3. Propter quod necessarium apparet ad bene esse mundi Monarchiam esse, sive unicum principatum qui ‘Imperium’ appellatur. Hanc rationem suspirabat Boetius dicens: O felix hominum genus si vestros animos amor, quo celum regitur, regat.

X. 1. Et ubicunque potest esse litigium, ibi debet esse iudicium; aliter esset inperfectum sine proprio perfectivo: quod est impossibile, cum Deus et natura in necessariis non deficiat. 2. Inter omnes duos principes, quorum alter alteri minime subiectus est, potest esse litigium vel culpa ipsorum vel etiam subditorum — quod de se patet — : ergo inter tales oportet esse iudicium. 3. Et cum alter de altero cognoscere non possit ex quo alter alteri non subditur — nam par in parem non habet imperium — oportet esse tertium iurisdictionis amplioris qui ambitu sui iuris ambobus principetur. Et hic aut erit Monarcha aut non. 4. Si sic, habetur propositum; si non, iterum habebit sibi coequalem extra ambitum sue iurisdictionis: tunc iterum necessarius erit tertius alius. 5. Et sic aut erit processus in infinitum, quod esse non potest, aut oportebit devenire ad iudicem primum et summum, de cuius iudicio cuncta litigia dirimantur sive mediate sive inmediate: et hic erit Monarcha sive Imperator. Est igitur Monarchia necessaria mundo. 6. Et hanc rationem videbat Phylosophus cum dicebat: “Entia nolunt male disponi; malum autem pluralitas principatuum: unus ergo princeps”.

XI. 1. Preterea, mundus optime dispositus est cum iustitia in eo potissima est. Unde Virgilius commendare volens illud seculum quod suo tempore surgere videbatur, in suis Buccolicis cantabat: Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna. ‘Virgo’ nanque vocabatur iustitia, quam etiam ‘Astream’ vocabant ‘Saturnia regna’ dicebant optima tempora, que etiam ‘aurea’ nuncupabant. 2. Iustitia potissima est solum sub Monarcha: ergo ad optimam mundi dispositionem requiritur esse Monarchiam sive Imperium. 3. Ad evidentiam subassumpte sciendum quod iustitia, de se et in propria natura considerata, est quedam

rectitudo sive regula obliquum hinc inde abiciens: et sic non recipit magis et minus, quemadmodum albedo in suo abstracto considerata. 4. Sunt enim huiusmodi forme quedam compositioni contingentes, et consistentes simplici et invariabili essentia, ut Magister Sex Principiorum recte ait. Recipiunt tamen magis et minus huiusmodi qualitates ex parte subiectorum quibus concernuntur, secundum quod magis et minus in subiectis de contrariis admiscetur. 5. Ubi ergo minimum de contrario iustitie admiscetur et quantum ad habitum et quantum ad operationem, ibi iustitia potissima est; et vere tunc potest dici de illa, ut Phylosophus inquit, “neque Hesperus neque Lucifer sic admirabilis est”. Est enim tunc Phebe similis, fratrem dyametraliter intuenti de purpureo matutine serenitatis. 6. Quantum ergo ad habitum, iustitia contrarietatem habet quandoque in velle; nam ubi voluntas ab omni cupiditate sincera non est, etsi assit iustitia, non tamen omnino inest in fulgore sue puritatis: habet etòm subiectum, licet minime, aliqualiter tamen sibi resistens; propter quod bene repelluntur qui iudicem passionare conantur. 7. Quantum vero ad operationem, iustitia contrarietatem habet in posse; nam cum iustitia sit virtus ad alterum, sine potentia tribuendi cuique quod suum est quomodo quis operabitur secundum illam? Ex quo patet quod quanto iustus potentior, tanto in operatione sua iustitia erit amplior. 8. Ex hac itaque declaratione sic arguatur: iustitia potissima est in mundo quando volentissimo et potentissimo subiecto inest; huiusmodi solus Monarcha est: ergo soli Monarche insistens iustitia in mundo potissima est. 9. Iste prosillogismus currit per secundam figuram cum negatione intrinseca, et est similis huic: omne B est A; solum C est A: ergo solum C est B. Quod est: omne B est A; nullum preter C est A: ergo nullum preter C est B. 10. Et prima propositio declaratione precedente apparet; alia sic ostenditur, et primo quantum ad velle, deinde quantum ad posse. 11. Ad evidentiam primi notandum quod iustitie maxime contrariatur cupiditas, ut innuit Aristotiles in quinto ad Nicomacum. Remota cupiditate omnino, nichil iustitie restat adversum; unde sententia Phylosophi est ut que lege determinari possunt nullo modo iudici relinquantur. Et hoc metu cupiditatis fieri oportet, de facili mentes hominum detorquentis. Ubi ergo non est quod possit optari, inpossibile est ibi cupiditatem esse: destructis enim obiectis, passiones esse non possunt. 12. Sed Monarcha non habet quod possit optare: sua nanque iurisdictio terminatur Occeano solum: quod non contingit principibus aliis, quorum principatus ad alios terminantur, ut puta regis Castelle ad illum qui regis Aragonum. Ex quo sequitur quod Monarcha sincerissimum inter mortales iustitie possit esse subiectum. 13. Preterea, quemadmodum cupiditas habitualem iustitiam quodammodo, quantumcunque pauca, obnubilat, sic karitas seu recta dilectio illam acuit atque dilucidat. Cui ergo maxime recta dilectio inesse potest, potissimum locum in illo potest habere

iustitia; huiusmodi est Monarcha: ergo, eo existente, iustitia potissima est vel esse potest. 14. Quod autem recta dilectio faciat quod dictum est, hinc haberi potest: cupiditas nanque, perseitate hominum spreta, querit alia; karitas vero, spretis aliis omnibus, querit Deum et hominem, et per consequens bonum hominis. Cumque inter alia bona hominis potissimum sit in pace vivere — ut supra dicebatur — et hoc operetur maxime atque potissime iustitia, karitas maxime iustitiam vigorabit et potior potius. 15. Et quod Monarche maxime hominum recta dilectio inesse debeat, patet sic: omne diligibile tanto magis diligitur quanto propinquius est diligenti; sed homines propinquius Monarche sunt quam aliis principibus: ergo ab eo maxime diliguntur vel diligi debent. Prima manifesta est, si natura passivorum et activorum consideretur; secunda per hoc apparet: quia principibus aliis homines non appropinquant nisi in parte, Monarche vero secundum totum. 16. Et rursus: principibus aliis appropinquant per Monarcham et non e converso; et sic per prius et immediate Monarche inest cura de omnibus, aliis autem principibus per Monarcham, eo quod cura ipsorum a cura illa supprema descendit. 17. Preterea, quanto causa est universalior, tanto magis habet rationem cause, quia inferior non est causa nisi per superiorem, ut patet ex hiis que De causis; et quanto causa magis est causa, tanto magis effectum diligit, cum dilectio talis assequatur causam per se. 18. Cum igitur Monarcha sit universalissima causa inter mortales ut homines bene vivant, quia principes alii per illum, ut dictum est, consequens est quod bonum hominum ab eo maxime diligatur. 19. Quod autem Monarcha potissime se habeat ad operationem iustitie, quis dubitat nisi qui vocem hanc non intelligit, cum, si Monarcha est, hostes habere non possit? 20. Satis igitur declarata subassumpta principalis, quia conclusio certa est: scilicet quod ad optimam dispositionem mundi necesse est Monarchiam esse.

XII. 1. Et humanum genus potissime liberum optime se habet. Hoc erit manifestum, si principium pateat libertatis. 2. Propter quod sciendum quod principium primum nostre libertatis est libertas arbitrii, quam multi habent in ore, in intellectu vero pauci. Veniunt nanque usque ad hoc: ut dicant liberum arbitrium esse liberum de voluntate iudicium. Et verum dicunt; sed importatum per verba longe est ab eis, quemadmodum tota die logici nostri faciunt de quibusdam propositionibus, que ad exemplum logicalibus interseruntur; puta de hac: ‘triangulus habet tres duobus rectis equales’. 3. Et ideo dico quod iudicium medium est apprehensionis et appetitus: nam primo res apprehenditur, deinde apprehensa bona vel mala iudicatur, et ultimo iudicans prosequitur sive fugit. 4. Si ergo iudicium moveat omnino appetitum et nullo modo preveniatur ab eo, liberum est; si vero ab appetitu quocunque modo proveniente iudicium moveatur, liberum esse non potest, quia non a se, sed ab alio captivum trahitur.

5. Et hinc est quod bruta iudicium liberum habere non possunt, quia eorum iudicia semper ab appetitu preveniuntur. Et hinc etiam patere potest quod substantie intellectuales, quarum sunt inmutabiles voluntates, necnon anime separate bene hinc abeuntes, libertatem arbitrii ob inmutabilitatem voluntatis non amictunt, sed perfectissime atque potissime hoc retinent. 6. Hoc viso, iterum manifestum esse potest quod hec libertas sive principium hoc totius nostre libertatis est maximum donum humane nature a Deo collatum — sicut in Paradiso Comedie iam dixi — quia per ipsum hic felicitamur ut homines, per ipsum alibi felicitamur ut dii. 7. Quod si ita est, quis erit qui humanum genus optime se habere non dicat, cum potissime hoc principio possit uti? 8. Sed existens sub Monarcha est potissime liberum. Propter quod sciendum quod illud est liberum quod “sui met et non alterius gratia est”, ut Phylosopho placet in hiis que De simpliciter ente. Nam illud quod est alterius gratia necessitatur ab illo cuius gratia est, sicut via necessitatur a termino. 9. Genus humanum solum imperante Monarcha sui et non alterius gratia est: tunc enim solum politie diriguntur oblique — democratie scilicet, oligarchie atque tyrampnides — que in servitutem cogunt genus humanum, ut patet discurrenti per omnes, et politizant reges, aristocratici quos optimates vocant, et populi libertatis zelatores; quia cum Monarcha maxime diligat homines, ut iam tactum est, vult omnes homines bonos fieri: quod esse non potest apud oblique politizantes. 10. Unde Phylosophus in suis Politicis ait quod in politia obliqua bonus homo est malus civis, in recta vero bonus homo et civis bonus convertuntur. Et huiusmodi politie recte libertatem intendunt, scilicet ut homines propter se sint. 11. Non enim cives propter consules nec gens propter regem, sed e converso consules propter cives et rex propter gentem; quia quemadmodum non politia ad leges, quinymo leges ad politiam ponuntur, sic secundum legem viventes non ad legislatorem ordinantur, sed magis ille ad hos, ut etiam Phylosopho placet in hiis que de presenti materia nobis ab eo relicta sunt. 12. Hinc etiam patet quod, quamvis consul sive rex respectu vie sint domini aliorum, respectu autem termini aliorum ministri sunt, et maxime Monarcha, qui minister omnium proculdubio habendus est. Hinc etiam iam innotescere potest quod Monarcha necessitatur a fine sibi prefixo in legibus ponendis. 13. Ergo genus humanum sub Monarcha existens optime se habet; ex quo sequitur quod ad bene esse mundi Monarchiam necesse est esse.

XIII. 1. Adhuc, ille qui potest esse optime dispositus ad regendum, optime alios disponere potest: nam in omni actione principaliter intenditur ab agente, sive necessitate nature sive volontarie agat, propriam similitudinem explicare. 2. Unde fit quod omne agens, in quantum huiusmodi, delectatur; quia, cum omne quod est appetat suum esse, ac in agendo agentis esse quodammodo amplietur,

sequitur de necessitate delectatio, quia delectatio rei desiderate semper annexa est. 3. Nichil igitur agit nisi tale existens quale patiens fieri debet; propter quod Phylosophus in hiis que De simpliciter ente: “Omne” inquit “quod reducitur de potentia in actum, reducitur per tale existens actu”; quod si aliter aliquid agere conetur, frustra conatur. 4. Et hinc destrui potest error illorum qui bona loquendo et mala operando credunt alios vita et moribus informare, non advertentes quod plus persuaserunt manus Iacob quam verba, licet ille falsum, illa verum persuaderent. Unde Phylosophus ad Nicomacum: “De hiis enim” inquit “que in passionibus et actionibus, sermones minus sunt credibiles operibus”. 5. Hine etiam dicebatur de celo peccatori David: “Quare tu enarras iustitias meas?”, quasi diceret: ‘Frustra loqueris, cum tu sis alius ab eo quod loqueris’. Ex quibus colligitur quod optime dispositum esse oportet optime alios disponere volentem. 6. Sed Monarcha solus est ille qui potest optime esse dispositus ad regendum. Quod sic declaratur: unaqueque res eo facilius et perfectius ad habitum et ad operationem disponitur, quo minus in ea est de contrarietate ad talem dispositionem; unde facilius et perfectius veniunt ad habitum phylosophice veritatis qui nichil unquam audiverunt, quam qui audiverunt per tempora et falsis oppinionibus imbuti sunt. Propter quod bene Galienus inquit “tales duplici tempore indigere ad scientiam acquirendam”. 7. Cum ergo Monarcha nullam cupiditatis occasionem habere possit vel saltem minimam inter mortales, ut superius est ostensum, quod ceteris principibus non contingit, et cupiditas ipsa sola sit corruptiva iudicii et iustitie prepeditiva, consequens est quod ipse vel omnino vel maxime bene dispositus ad regendum esse potest, quia inter ceteros iudicium et iustitiam potissime habere potest: que duo principalissime legis latori et legis executori conveniunt, testante rege illo sanctissimo cum convenientia regi et filio regis postulabat a Deo: “Deus” inquiebat “iudicium tuum regi da et iustitiam tuam filio regis”. 8. Bene igitur dictum est cum dicitur in subassumpta quod Monarcha solus est ille, qui potest esse optime dispositus ad regendum: ergo Monarcha solus optime alios disponere potest. Ex quo sequitur quod ad optimam mundi dispositionem Monarchia sit necessaria.

XIV. 1. Et quod potest fieri per unum, melius est per unum fieri quam per plura. Quod sic declaratur: sit unum, per quod aliquid fieri potest, A, et sint plura, per que similiter illud fieri potest, A et B; si ergo illud idem quod fit per A et B potest fieri per A tantum, frustra ibi assummitur B, quia ex ipsius assumptione nichil sequitur, cum prius illud idem fiebat per A solum. 2. Et cum omnis talis assumptio sit otiosa sive superflua, et omne superfluum Deo et nature displiceat, et omne quod Deo et nature displicet sit malum, ut manifestum est de se, sequitur non solum melius esse fieri per unum, si fieri potest, quam fieri per plura, sed quod fieri per unum est bonum, per plura simpliciter malum. 3.

Preterea, res dicitur melior per esse propinquior optime; et finis habet rationem optimi; sed fieri per unum est propinquius fini: ergo est melius. Et quod sit propinquius patet sic: sit finis C; fieri per unum A; per plura A et B: manifestum est quod longior est via ab A per B in C, quam ab A tantum in C. 4. Sed humanum genus potest regi per unum suppremum principem, qui est Monarcha. Propter quod advertendum sane quod cum dicitur ‘humanum genus potest regi per unum suppremum principem’, non sic intelligendum est, ut minima iudicia cuiuscunque municipii ab illo uno immediate prodire possint: cum etiam leges municipales quandoque deficiant et opus habeant directivo, ut patet per Phylosophum in quinto ad Nicomacum epyikiam commendantem. 5. Habent nanque nationes, regna et civitates intra se proprietates, quas legibus differentibus regulari oportet: est enim lex regula directiva vite. 6. Aliter quippe regulari oportet Scithas qui, extra septimum clima viventes et magnam dierum et noctium inequalitatem patientes, intolerabili quasi algore frigoris premuntur, et aliter Garamantes qui, sub equinoctiali habitantes et coequatam semper lucem diurnam noctis tenebris habentes, ob estus acris nimietatem vestimentis operiri non possunt. 7. Sed sic intelligendum est: ut humanum genus secundum sua comunia, que omnibus competunt, ab eo regatur et comuni regula gubernetur ad pacem. Quam quidem regulam sive legem particulares principes ab eo recipere debent, tanquam intellectus practicus ad conclusionem operativam recipit maiorem propositionem ab intellectu speculativo, et sub illa particularem, que proprie sua est, assummit et particulariter ad operationem concludit. 8. Et hoc non solum possibile est uni, sed necesse est ab uno procedere, ut omnis confusio de principiis universalibus auferatur. 9. Hoc etiam factum fuisse per ipsum ipse Moyses in lege conscribit, qui, assumptis primatibus de tribubus filiorum Israel, eis inferiora iudicia relinquebat, superiora et comuniora sibi soli reservans, quibus comunioribus utebantur primates per tribus, secundum quod unicuique tribui competebat. 10. Ergo melius est humanum genus per unum regi quam per plura, et sic per Monarcham qui unicus est princeps; et si melius, Deo acceptabilius, cum Deus semper velit quod melius est. Et cum duorum tantum inter se idem sit melius et optimum, consequens est non solum Deo esse acceptabilius hoc, inter hoc ‘unum’ et hoc ‘plura’, sed acceptabilissimum. 11. Unde sequitur humanum genus optime se habere cum ab uno regitur; et sic ad bene esse mundi necesse est Monarchiam esse.

XV. 1. Item dico quod ens et unum et bonum gradatim se habent secundum quintum modum dicendi ‘prius’. Ens enim natura precedit unum, unum vero bonum: maxime enim ens maxime est unum, et maxime unum maxime bonum; et quanto aliquid a maxime ente elongatur, tanto et ab esse unum et per consequens ab esse bonum. 2. Propter quod in omni genere rerum illud est

optimum quod est maxime unum, ut Phylosopho placet in hiis que De simpliciter ente. Unde fit quod unum esse videtur esse radix eius quod est esse bonum, et multa esse eius quod est esse malum; qua re Pictagoras in correlationibus suis ex parte boni ponebat unum, ex parte vero mali plurale, ut patet in primo eorum que De simpliciter ente. 3. Hinc videri potest quod peccare nichil est aliud quam progredi ab uno spreto ad multa; quod quidem Psalmista videbat dicens: “A fructu frumenti, vini et olei multiplicati sunt”. 4. Constat igitur quod omne quod est bonum per hoc est bonum: quod in uno consistit. Et cum concordia, in quantum huiusmodi, sit quoddam bonum, manifestum est ipsam consistere in aliquo uno tanquam in propria radice. 5. Que quidem radix apparebit, si natura vel ratio concordie summatur: est enim concordia uniformis motus plurium voluntatum; in qua quidem ratione apparet unitatem voluntatum, que per uniformem motum datur intelligi, concordie radicem esse vel ipsam concordiam. 6. Nam, sicut plures glebas diceremus ‘concordes’ propter condiscendere omnes ad medium, et plures flammas propter coadscendere omnes ad circunferentiam, si volontarie hoc facerent; ita homines plures ‘concordes’ dicimus propter simul moveri secundum velle ad unum quod est formaliter in suis voluntatibus, sicut qualitas una formaliter in glebis, scilicet gravitas, et una in fiammis, scilicet levitas. 7. Nam virtus volitiva potentia quedam est, sed speties boni apprehensi forma est eius: que quidem forma, quemadmodum et alie, una in se, multiplicatur secundum multiplicationem materie recipientis, ut anima et numerus et alie forme compositioni contingentes. 8. Hiis premissis propter declarationem assummende propositionis ad propositum, sic arguatur: omnis concordia dependet ab unitate que est in voluntatibus; genus humanum optime se habens est quedam concordia; nam, sicut unus homo optime se habens et quantum ad animam et quantum ad corpus est concordia quedam, et similiter domus, civitas et regnum, sic totum genus humanum; ergo genus humanum optime se habens ab unitate que est in voluntatibus dependet. 9. Sed hoc esse non potest nisi sit voluntas una, domina et regulatrix omnium aliarum in unum, cum mortalium voluntates propter blandas adolescentie delectationes indigeant directivo, ut in ultimis ad Nicomacum docet Phylosophus. Nec ista una potest esse, nisi sit princeps unus omnium, cuius voluntas domina et regulatrix aliarum omnium esse possit. 10. Quod si omnes consequentie superiores vere sunt, quod sunt, necesse est ad optime se habere humanum genus esse in mundo Monarcham, et per consequens Monarchiam ad bene esse mundi.

XVI. 1. Rationibus omnibus supra positis experientia memorabilis attestatur: status videlicet illius mortalium quem Dei Filius, in salutem hominis hominem assumpturus, vel expectavit vel cum voluit ipse disposuit. Nam si a lapsu primorum parentum, qui diverticulum fuit totius nostre deviationis, dispositiones

hominum et tempora recolamus, non inveniemus nisi sub divo Augusto monarcha, existente Monarchia perfecta, mundum undique fuisse quietum. 2. Et quod tunc humanum genus fuerit felix in pacis universalis tranquillitate hoc ystoriographi omnes, hoc poete illustres, hoc etiam scriba mansuetudinis Cristi testari dignatus est; et denique Paulus “plenitudinem temporis” statum illum felicissimum appellavit. Vere tempus et temporalia queque plena fuerunt, quia nullum nostre felicitatis ministerium ministro vacavit. 3. Qualiter autem se habuerit orbis ex quo tunica ista inconsutilis cupiditatis ungue scissuram primitus passa est, et legere possumus et utinam non videre. 4. O genus humanum, quantis procellis atque iacturis quantisque naufragiis agitari te necesse est dum, bellua multorum capitum factum, in diversa conaris ! 5. Intellectu egrotas utroque, similiter et affectu: rationibus irrefragabilibus intellectum superiorem non curas, nec experientie vultu inferiorem, sed nec affectum dulcedine divine suasionis, cum per tubam Sancti Spiritus tibi effletur: “Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum, habitare fratres in unum”.

LIBER TERTIUS

I. 1. “Conclusit ora leonum, et non nocuerunt michi: quia coram eo iustitia inventa est in me”. In principio huius operis propositum fuit de tribus questionibus, prout materia pateretur, inquirere; de quarum duabus primis in superioribus libris, ut credo, sufficienter peractum est. 2. Nunc autem de tertia restat agendum: cuius quidem veritas, quia sine rubore aliquorum emergere nequit, forsitan alicuius indignationis in me causa erit. 3. Sed quia de trono immutabili suo Veritas deprecatur, Salomon etiam silvam Proverbiorum ingrediens meditandam veritatem, impium detestandum in se facturo nos docet, ac preceptor morum Phylosophus familiaria destruenda pro veritate suadet; assumpta fiducia de verbis Danielis premissis, in quibus divina potentia clipeus defensorum veritatis astruitur, iuxta monitionem Pauli fidei loricam induens, in calore carbonis illius quem unus de Seraphin accepit de altari celesti et tetigit labia Ysaie, gignasium presens ingrediar, et in brachio Illius qui nos de potestate tenebrarum liberavit in sanguine suo impium atque mendacem de palestra, spectante mundo, eiciam. 4. Quid timeam, cum Spiritus Patri et Filio coecternus aiat per os David: “In memoria ecterna erit iustus, ab auditione mala non timebit”? 5. Questio igitur presens, de qua inquisitio futura est, inter duo luminaria magna versatur: romanum scilicet Pontificem et romanum Principem; et queritur utrum auctoritas Monarche romani, qui de iure Monarcha munii est, ut in secundo libro probatum est, inmediate a Deo dependeat an ab aliquo Dei vicario vel ministro, quem Petri successorem intelligo, qui vere claviger est regni celorum.

II. 1. Ad presentem questionem discutiendam, sicut in superioribus est peractum, aliquod principium est assummendum in virtute cuius aperiende veritatis argumenta formentur; nam sine prefixo principio etiam vera dicendo laborare quid prodest, cum principium solum assummendorum mediorum sit radix? 2. Hec igitur irrefragabilis veritas prefigatur: scilicet quod illud quod nature intentioni repugnat Deus nolit. Nam si hoc verum non esset, contradictorium eius non esset falsum, quod est: Deum non nolle quod nature intentioni repugnat. 3. Et si hoc non falsum, nec ea que secuntur ad ipsum; impossibile enim est in necessariis consequentiis falsum esse consequens antecedente non falso existente. 4. Sed ad non nolle alterum duorum sequitur de necessitate: aut velle aut non velle; sicut ad non odire necessario sequitur aut amare aut non amare; non enim non amare est odire, nec non velle est nolle, ut de se patet. Que si falsa non sunt, ista non erit falsa: ‘Deus vult quod non vult’; cuius falsitas non habet superiorem. 5. Quod autem verum sit quod dicitur sic declaro: manifestum est

quod Deus finem nature vult, aliter celum otiose moveret; quod dicendum non est. Si Deus vellet impedimentum finis, vellet etiam finem impedimenti, aliter etiam otiose vellet; et cum finis impedimenti sit non esse rei impedite, sequeretur Deum velle non esse finem nature, quem dicitur velle esse. 6. Si enim Deus non vellet impedimentum finis, prout non vellet sequeretur ad non velle nichil de impedimento curare, sive esset sive non esset; sed qui impedimentum non curat, rem que potest impediri non curat, et per consequens non habet in voluntate; et quod quis non habet in voluntate, non vult. 7. Propter quod si finis nature impediri potest — quod potest — de necessitate sequitur quod Deus finem nature non vult; et sic sequitur quod prius: videlicet Deum velle quod non vult. Verissimum igitur est illud principium ex cuius contradictorio tam absurda secuntur.

III. 1. In introitu ad questionem hanc notare oportet quod prime questionis veritas magis manifestanda fuit ad ignorantiam tollendam, quam ad tollendum litigium; sed que fuit secunde questionis, quasi equaliter ad ignorantiam et litigium se habebat: multa etenim ignoramus de quibus non litigamus. 2. Nam geometra circuli quadraturam ignorat non tamen de ipsa litigat; theologus vero numerum angelorum ignorat; non tamen de illo litigium facit; Egiptius vero civilitatem Scitharum ignorat, non propter hoc de ipsorum civilitate contendit. 3. Huius quidem tertie questionis veritas tantum habet litigium, ut, quemadmodum in aliis ignorantia solet esse causa litigii, sic et hic litigium causa ignorantie sit magis. 4. Hominibus nanque rationis intuitu voluntatem prevolantibus hoc sepe contingit: ut, male affecti, lumine rationis postposito, affectu quasi ceci trahantur et pertinaciter suam denegent cecitatem. 5. Unde fit persepe quod non solum falsitas patrocinium habeat, sed — ut plerique — de suis terminis egredientes per aliena castra discurrant; ubi nichil intelligentes, ipsi nichil intelliguntur: et sic provocant quosdam ad iram, quosdam ad dedignationem, nonnullos ad risum. 6. Igitur contra veritatem que queritur tria hominum genera maxime colluctantur. 7. Summus nanque Pontifex, domini nostri Iesu Cristi vicarius et Petri successor, cui non quicquid Cristo sed quicquid Petro debemus, zelo fortasse clavium, necnon alii gregum cristianorum pastores, et alii quos credo zelo solo matris Ecclesie promoveri, veritati quam ostensurus sum de zelo forsan — ut dixi — non de superbia contradicunt. 8. Quidam vero alii, quorum obstinata cupiditas lumen rationis extinxit — et dum ex patre dyabolo sunt, Ecclesie se filios esse dicunt — non solum in hac questione litigium movent, sed sacratissimi principatus vocabulum aborrentes superiorum questionum et huius principia inpudenter negarent. 9. Sunt etiam tertii — quos decretalistas vocant — qui, theologie ac phylosophie cuiuslibet inscii et expertes, suis decretalibus — quas profecto venerandas existimo — tota intentione innixi, de illarum prevalentia —

credo — sperantes, Imperio derogant. 10. Nec mirum, cum iam audiverim quendam de illis dicentem et procaciter asserentem traditiones Ecclesie fidei fundamentum: quod quidem nefas de oppinione mortalium illi summoveant qui ante traditiones Ecclesie in Filium Dei Cristum sive venturum sive presentem sive iam passum crediderunt, et credendo speraverunt, et sperantes karitate arserunt, et ardentes ei coheredes factos esse mundus non dubitat. 11. Et ut tales de presenti gignasio totaliter excludantur, est advertendum quod quedam scriptura est ante Ecclesiam, quedam cum Ecclesia, quedam post Ecclesiam. 12. Ante quidem Ecclesiam sunt vetus et novum Testamentum, quod “in ecternum mandatum est” ut ait Propheta; hoc enim est quod dicit Ecclesia loquens ad sponsum: “Trahe me post te”. 13. Cum Ecclesia vero sunt veneranda illa concilia principalia quibus Cristum interfuisse nemo fidelis dubitat, cum habeamus ipsum dixisse discipulis ascensurum in celum “Ecce ego vobiscum sum in omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem seculi”, ut Matheus testatur. Sunt etiam Scripture doctorum, Augustini et aliorum, quos a Spiritu Sancto adiutos qui dubitat, fructus eorum vel omnino non vidit vel, si vidit, minime degustavit. 14. Post Ecclesiam vero sunt traditiones quas ‘decretales’ dicunt: que quidem etsi auctoritate apostolica sunt venerande, fundamentali tamen Scripture postponendas esse dubitandum non est, cum Cristus sacerdotes obiurgaverit de contrario. 15. Cum enim interrogassent: “Quare discipuli tui traditionem seniorum transgrediuntur?” — negligebant enim manuum lotionem — Cristus eis, Matheo testante, respondit: “Quare et vos transgredimini mandatum Dei propter traditionem vestram?”. In quo satis innuit traditionem postponendam. 16. Quod si traditiones Ecclesie post Ecclesiam sunt, ut declaratum est, necesse est ut non Ecclesie a traditionibus, sed ab Ecclesia traditionibus accedat auctoritas. Hiique solas traditiones habentes ab hoc — ut dicebatur — gignasio excludendi sunt: oportet enim, hanc veritatem venantes, ex hiis ex quibus Ecclesie manat auctoritas investigando procedere. 17. Hiis itaque sic exclusis, excludendi sunt alii qui, corvorum plumis operti, oves albas in grege Domini se iactant. Hii sunt impietatis filii qui, ut flagitia sua exequi possint, matrem prostituunt, fratres expellunt, et denique iudicem habere nolunt. Nam cur ad eos ratio quereretur, cum sua cupiditate detenti principia non viderent? 18. Quapropter cum solis concertatio restat qui, aliquali zelo erga matrem Ecclesiam ducti, ipsam que queritur veritatem ignorant: cum quibus illa reverentia fretus quam pius filius debet patri, quam pius filius matri, pius in Cristum, pius in Ecclesiam, pius in pastorem, pius in omnes cristianam religionem profitentes, pro salute veritatis in hoc libro certamen incipio.

IV. 1. Isti vero ad quos erit tota disputatio sequens, asserentes auctoritatem Imperii ab auctoritate Ecclesie dipendere velut artifex inferior dependet ab

architecto, pluribus et diversis argumentis moventur; que quidem de Sacra Scriptura eliciunt et de quibusdam gestis tam summi Pontificis quam ipsius Imperatoris, nonnullum vero rationis indicium habere nituntur. 2. Dicunt enim primo, secundum scripturam Geneseos, quod Deus fecit duo magna luminaria — luminare maius et luminare minus — ut alterum preesset diei et alterum preesset nocti: que allegorice dicta esse intelligebant ista duo regimina: scilicet spirituale et temporale. 3. Deinde arguunt quod, quemadmodum luna, que est luminare minus, non habet lucem nisi prout recipit a sole, sic nec regnum temporale auctoritatem habet nisi prout recipit a spirituali regimine. 4. Propter hanc et propter alias eorum rationes dissolvendas prenotandum quod, sicut Phylosopho placet in hiis que De sophisticis elenchis, solutio argumenti est erroris manifestatio. Et quia error potest esse in materia et in forma argumenti, dupliciter peccare contingit: aut scilicet assummendo falsum, aut non sillogizando; que duo Phylosophus obiciebat contra Parmenidem et Melissum dicens: “Quia falsa recipiunt et non sillogizantes sunt”. Et accipio hic largo modo ‘falsum’ etiam pro ‘inoppinabili’, quod in materia probabili habet naturam falsi. 5. Si vero in forma sit peccatum, conclusio interimenda est ab illo qui solvere vult, ostendendo formam sillogisticam non esse servatam. Si vero peccatum sit in materia, aut est quia ‘simpliciter’ falsum assumptum est, aut quia falsum ‘secundum quid’. Si ‘simpliciter’, per interemptionem assumpti solvendum est; si ‘secundum quid’, per distinctionem. 6. Hoc viso, ad meliorem huius et aliarum inferius factarum solutionum evidentiam advertendum quod circa sensum misticum dupliciter errare contingit: aut querendo ipsum ubi non est, aut accipiendo aliter quam accipi debeat. 7. Propter primum dicit Augustinus in Civitate Dei: “Non omnia que gesta narrantur etiam significare aliquid putanda sunt, sed propter illa que aliquid significant etiam ea que nichil significant actexuntur. Solo vomere terra proscinditur; sed ut hoc fieri possit, etiam cetera aratri membra sunt necessaria”. 8. Propter secundum idem ait in Doctrina Cristiana, loquens de illo aliud in Scripturis sentire quam ille qui scripsit eas dicit, quod “ita fallitur ac si quisquam deserens viam eo tamen per girum pergeret quo via illa perducit”; et subdit: “Demonstrandum est ut consuetudine deviandi etiam in transversum aut perversum ire cogatur”. 9. Deinde innuit causam quare cavendum sit hoc in Scripturis, dicens: “Titubabit fides, si Divinarum Scripturarum vacillat autoritas”. 10. Ego autem dico quod si talia fiunt de ignorantia, correctione diligenter adhibita ignoscendum est sicut ignoscendum esset illi qui leonem in nubibus formidaret; si vero industria. non aliter cum sic errantibus est agendum, quam cum tyrampnis, qui publica iura non ad comunem utilitatem secuntur, sed ad propriam retorquere conantur. 11. O summum facinus, etiamsi contingat in sompniis, ecterni Spiritus intentione

abuti! Non enim peccatur in Moysen, non in David, non in Iob, non in Matheum, non in Paulum, sed in Spiritum Sanctum qui loquitur in illis. Nam quanquam scribe divini eloquii multi sint, unicus tamen dictator est Deus, qui beneplacitum suum nobis per multorum calamos explicare dignatus est. 12. Hiis itaque prenotatis, ad id quod superius dicebatur dico per interemptionem illius dicti quo dicunt illa duo luminaria typice importare duo hec regimina: in quo quidem dicto tota vis argumenti consistit. 13. Quod autem ille sensus omnino sustineri non possit, duplici via potest ostendi. Primo quia, cum huiusmodi regimina sint accidentia quedam ipsius hominis, videretur Deus usus fòisse ordine perverso accidentia prius producendo quam proprium subicctum: quod absurdum est dicere dc Deo; nam illa duo luminaria producta sunt die quarto et homo die sexto, ut patet in Lictera. 14. Preterea, cum ista regimina sint hominum directiva in quosdam fines, ut infra patebit, si homo stetisset in statu innocentie in quo a Deo factus est, talibus directivis non indiguisset: sunt ergo huiusmodi regimina remedia contra infirmitatem peccati. 15. Cum ergo non solum in die quarto peccator homo non erat, sed etiam simpliciter homo non erat, producere remedia fuisset otiosum: quod est contra divinam bonitatem. Stultus enim esset medicus qui, ante nativitatem hominis, pro apostemate futuro illi emplastrum conficeret. 16. Non igitur dicendum est quod quarto die Deus hec duo regimina fecerit; et per consequens intentio Moysi esse non potuit illa quam fingunt. 17. Potest etiam hoc, mendacio tollerando, per distinctionem dissolvi: mitior nanque est in adversarium solutio distinctiva; non enim omnino mentiens esse videtur, sicut interemptiva illum videri facit. Dico ergo quod licet luna non habeat lucem habundanter nisi ut a sole recipit, non propter hoc sequitur quod ipsa luna sit a sole. 18. Unde sciendum quod aliud est esse ipsius lune, aliud virtus eius, et aliud operari. Quantum est ad esse, nullo modo luna dependet a sole, nec etiam quantum ad virtutem, nec quantum ad operationem simpliciter; quia motus eius est a motore proprio, influentia sua est a propriis eius radiis: habet enim aliquam lucem ex se, ut in eius eclipsi manifestum est. 19. Sed quantum ad melius et virtuosius operandum, recipit aliquid a sole, quia lucem habundantem: qua recepta, virtuosius operatur. 20. Sic ergo dico quod regnum temporale non recipit esse a spirituali, nec virtutem que est eius auctoritas, nec etiam operationem simpliciter; sed bene ab eo recipit ut virtuosius operetur per lucem gratie quam in celo et in terra benedictio summi pontificis infundit illi. 21. Et ideo argumentum peccabat in forma, quia predicatum in conclusione non est extremitas maioris, ut patet; procedit enim sic: luna recipit lucem a sole qui est regimen spirituale; regimen temporale est luna; ergo regimen temporale recipit auctoritatem a regimine spirituali. 22. Nam in extremitate maioris ponunt

‘lucem’, in predicato vero conclusionis ‘auctoritatem’: que sunt res diverse subiecto et ratione, ut visum est

V. 1. Assummunt etiam argumentum de lictera Moysi, dicentes quod de femore Iacob fluxit figura horum duorum regiminum, quia Levi et Iudas: quorum alter fuit pater sacerdotii, alter vero regiminis temporalis. Deinde sic arguunt ex hiis: sicut se habuit Levi ad Iudam, sic se habet Ecclesia ad Imperium; Levi precessit Iudam in nativitate, ut patet in Lictera: ergo Ecclesia precedit Imperium in auctoritate. 2. Et hoc vero de facili solvitur; nam cum dicunt quod Levi et Iudas, filii Iacob, figurant ista regimina, possem similiter hoc interimendo dissolvere: sed concedatur. 3. Et cum arguendo inferunt ‘sicut Levi precedit in nativitate sic Ecclesia in auctoritate’, dico similiter quod aliud est predicatum conclusionis et aliud maior extremitas: nam aliud est ‘auctoritas’et aliud ‘nativitas’, subiecto et ratione; propter quod peccatur in forma. Et est similis processus huic: A precedit B in C; D et E se habent ut A et B: ergo D precedit E in F; F vero et C diversa sunt. 4. Et si ferrent instantiam dicentes quod F sequitur ad C, hoc est auctoritas ad nativitatem, et pro antecedente bene infertur consequens, ut animal pro homine, dico quod falsum est: multi enim sunt maiores natu qui non solum in auctoritate non precedunt, sed etiam preceduntur a iunioribus; ut patet ubi episcopi sunt tempore minores quam sui archipresbyteri. 5. Et sic instantia videtur errare secundum ‘non causam ut causa’.

VI. 1. De lictera vero primi libri Regum assummunt etiam creationem et depositionem Saulis, et dicunt quod Saul rex intronizatus fuit et de trono depositus per Samuelem, qui vice Dei de precepto fungebatur, ut in Lictera patet. 2. Et ex hoc arguunt quod, quemadmodum ille Dei vicarius auctoritatem habuit dandi et tollendi regimen temporale et in alium transferendi, sic et nunc Dei vicarius, Ecclesie universalis antistes, auctoritatem habet dandi et tollendi et etiam transferendi sceptrum regiminis temporalis; ex quo sine dubio sequeretur quod auctoritas Imperii dependeret ut dicunt. 3. Et ad hoc dicendum per interemptionem eius quod dicunt Samuelem Dei vicarium, quia non ut vicarius sed ut legatus spetialis ad hoc, sive nuntius portans mandatum Domini expressum, hoc fecit: quod patet quia quicquid Deus dixit, hoc fecit solum et hoc retulit. 4. Unde sciendum quod aliud est esse vicarium, aliud est esse nuntium sive ministrum: sicut aliud est esse doctorem, aliud est esse interpretem. 5. Nam vicarius est cui iurisdictio cum lege vel cum arbitrio commissa est; et ideo intra terminos iurisdictionis commisse de lege vel de arbitrio potest agere circa aliquid, quod dominus omnino ignorat. Nuntius autem non potest in quantum nuntius; sed quemadmodum malleus in sola virtute fabri operatur, sic et nuntius in solo arbitrio eius qui mictit illum. 6. Non igitur sequitur, si Deus per nuntium Samuelem fecit hoc, quod vicarius Dei hoc facere possit. Multa enim Deus per

angelos fecit et facit et facturus est que vicarius Dei, Petri successor, facere non posset. 7. Unde argumentum istorum est ‘a toto ad partem’, construendo sic: ‘homo potest videre et audire: ergo oculus potest videre et audire’. Et hoc non tenet; teneret autem ‘destrucrive’ sic: ‘homo non potest volare: ergo nec brachia hominis possunt volare’. Et similiter sic: ‘Deus per nuntium facere non potest genita non esse genita, iuxta sententiam Agathonis: ergo nec vicarius eius facere potest.

VII. 1. Assummunt etiam de lictera Mathei Magorum oblationem, dicentes Cristum recepisse simul thus et aurum ad significandum se ipsum dominum et gubernatorem spiritualium et temporalium; ex quo inferunt Cristi vicarium dominum et gubernatorem eorundem, et per consequens habere utrorunque auctoritatem. 2. Ad hoc respondens, licteram Mathei et sensum confiteor, sed quod ex illa inferre conantur interimo. Sillogizant enim sic: ‘Deus est dominus spiritualium et temporalium; summus Pontifex est vicarius Dei: ergo est dominus spiritualium et temporalium’. 3. Utraque nanque propositio vera est, sed medium variatur et arguitur in quatuor terminis, in quibus forma sillogistica non salvatur, ut patet ex hiis que de sillogismo simpliciter. Nam aliud est ‘Deus’, quod subicitur in maiori, et aliud ‘vicarius Dei’, quod predicatur in minori. 4. Et si quis instaret de vicarii equivalentia, inutilis est instantia; quia nullus vicariatus, sive divinus sive humanus, equivalere potest principali auctoritati: quod patet de levi. 5. Nam scimus quod successor Petri non equivalet divine auctoritati saltem in operatione nature: non enim posset facere terram ascendere sursum, nec ignem descendere deorsum per offitium sibi commissum. 6. Nec etiam possent omnia sibi commicti a Deo, quoniam potestatem creandi et similiter baptizandi nullo modo Deus commictere posset, ut evidenter probatur, licet Magister contrarium dixerit in quarto. 7. Scimus etiam quod vicarius hominis non equivalet ei, quantum in hoc quod vicarius est, quia nemo potest dare quod suum non est. Auctoritas principalis non est principis nisi ad usum, quia nullus princeps se ipsum auctorizare potest; recipere autem potest atque dimictere, sed alium creare non potest, quia creatio principis ex principe non dependet. 8. Quod si ita est, manifestum est quod nullus princeps potest sibi substituere vicarium in omnibus equivalentem: qua re instantia nullam efficaciam habet.

VIII. 1. Item assummunt de lictera eiusdem illud Cristi ad Petrum: “Et quodcunque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in celis; et quodcunque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in celis”; quod etiam omnibus apostolis est dictum. 2. Similiter accipiunt de lictera Mathei, similiter et Iohannis: ex quo arguunt successorem Petri omnia de concessione Dei posse tam ligare quam solvere; et inde inferunt posse solvere leges et decreta Imperii, atque leges et decreta ligare pro regimine temporali: unde bene sequeretur illud quod dicunt. 3.

Et dicendum ad hoc per distinctionem circa maiorem sillogismi quo utuntur. Sillogizant enim sic: ‘Petrus potuit solvere omnia et ligare; successor Petri potest quicquid Petrus potuit; ergo successor Petri potest omnia solvere et ligare’. Unde inferunt auctoritatem et decreta Imperii solvere et ligare ipsum posse. Minorem concedo, maiorem vero non sine distinctione. 4. Et ideo dico quod hoc signum universale ‘omne’, quod includitur in ‘quodcunque’, nunquam distribuit extra ambitum termini distributi. 5. Nam si dico ‘omne animal currit’, ‘omne’ distribuit pro omni eo quod sub genere animalis comprehenditur; si vero dico ‘omnis homo currit’, tunc signum universale non distribuit nisi pro suppositis huius termini ‘homo’; et cum dico ‘omnis grammaticus’, tunc distributio magis coartatur. 6. Propter quod semper videndum est quid est quod signum universale habet distribuire: quo viso, facile apparebit quantum sua distributio dilatetur, cognita natura et ambitu termini distributi. 7. Unde cum dicitur ‘quodcunque ligaveris’, si illud ‘quodcunque’ summeretur absolute, verum esset quod dicunt; et non solum hoc facere posset, quin etiam solvere uxorem a viro et ligare ipsam alteri vivente primo: quod nullo modo potest. Posset etiam solvere me non penitentem: quod etiam facere ipse Deus non posset. 8. Cum ergo ita sit, manifestum est quod non absolute summenda est illa distributio, sed respective ad aliquid. Quod autem illa respiciat satis est evidens considerato illo quod sibi conceditur, circa quod illa distributio subiungitur. 9. Dicit enim Cristus Petro: “Tibi dabo claves regni celorum”, hoc est ‘Faciam te hostiarium regni celorum’. Deinde subdit “et quodcunque”: quod est ‘omne quod’, id est ‘et omne quod ad istud offitium spectabit solvere poteris et ligare’. 10. Et sic signum universale quod includitur in ‘quodcunque’ contrahitur in sua distributione ab offitio clavium regni celorum: et sic assummendo, vera est illa propositio; absolute vero non, ut patet. 11. Et ideo dico quod etsi successor Petri, secundum exigentiam offitii commissi Petro, possit solvere et ligare, non tamen propter hoc sequitur quod possit solvere seu ligare decreta Imperii sive leges ut ipsi dicebant, nisi ulterius probaretur hoc spectare ad offitium clavium: cuius contrarium inferius ostendetur.

IX. 1. Accipiunt etiam illud Luce, quod Petrus dixit Cristo, cum ait “Ecce duo gladii hic”; et dicunt quod per illos duos gladios duo predicta regimina intelliguntur, que quidem Petrus dixit esse ibi ubi erat, hoc est apud se: unde arguunt illa duo regimina secundum auctoritatem apud successorem Petri consistere. 2. Et ad hoc dicendum per interemptionem sensus in quo fundant argumentum. Dicunt enim illos duos gladios, quos assignavit Petrus, duo prefata regimina importare: quod omnino negandum est, tum quia illa responsio non fuisset ad intentionem Cristi, tum quia Petrus de more subito respondebat ad rerum superficiem tantum. 3. Quod autem responsio non fuisset ad intentionem

Cristi non erit immanifestum, si considerentur verba precedente et causa verborum. Propter quod sciendum quod hoc dictum fuit in die Cene; unde Lucas incipit superius sic: “Venit autem dies azimorum in quo necesse erat occidi Pascha”, in qua quidem cena prelocutus fuit Cristus de ingruente passione, in qua oportebat ipsum separari a discipulis suis. 4. Item sciendum quod ubi ista verba intervenerunt erant simul omnes duodecim discipuli; unde parum post verba premissa dicit Lucas: “Et cum facta esset hora discubuit, et duodecim apostoli cum eo”. 5. Et ex hinc continuato colloquio venit ad hec: “Quando misi vos sine sacculo et pera et calciamentis, nunquid aliquid defuit vobis? At illi dixerunt: Nichil. Dixit ergo eis: Sed nunc qui habet sacculum tollat, similiter et peram; et qui non habet, vendat tunicam et emat gladium”. 6. In quo satis aperte intentio Cristi manifestatur; non enim dixit ‘ematis vel habeatis duos gladios’ — ymo duodecim, cum ad duodecim discipulos diceret “qui non habet emat” — ut quilibet haberet unum. 7. Et hoc etiam dicebat premonens eos pressuram futuram et despectum futurum erga eos, quasi diceret: ‘Quousque fui vobiscum, recepti eratis; nunc fugabimini. Unde oportet vos preparare vobis etiam ea que iam prohibui vobis propter necessitatem’. 8. Itaque si responsio Petri, que est ad hoc, fuisset sub intentione illa, iam non fuisset ad eam que erat Cristi: de quo Cristus ipsum increpasset sicut multotiens increpavit, cum inscie responderet. Hic autem non fecit, sed acquievit dicens ei “Satis est”; quasi diceret. ‘Propter necessitatem dico; sed si quilibet habere non potest, duo sufficere possunt’. 9. Et quod Petrus de more ad superficiem loqueretur, probat eius festina et inpremeditata presumptio, ad quam non solum fidei sinceritas impellebat, sed, ut credo, puritas et simplicitas naturalis. Hanc suam presumptionem scribe Cristi testantur omnes. 10. Scribit autem Matheus, cum Iesus interrogasset discipulos “Quem me esse dicitis?”, Petrum ante omnes respondisse: “Tu es Cristus, filius Dei vivi”. Scribit etiam quod, cum Cristus diceret discipulis quia oportebat eum ire in Ierusalem et multa pati, Petrus assumpsit eum et cepit increpare illum dicens “Absit a te, Domine; non erit tibi hoc”; ad quem Cristus, redarguens, conversus dixit: “Vade post me, Sathana”. 11. Item scribit quod in monte transfigurationis, in conspectu Cristi, Moysi et Elye et duorum filiorum Zebedei, dixit: “Domine, bonum est nos hic esse; si vis, faciamus hic tria tabernacula: tibi unum, Moysi unum et Elye unum”. 12. Item scribit quod, cum discipuli essent in navicula tempore noctis et Cristus ambularet super aquam, Petrus dixit: “Domine, si tu es, iube me ad te venire super aquas. 13. Item scribit quod, cum Cristus prenuntiaret scandalum discipulis suis, Petrus respondit: “Etsi omnes scandalizati fuerint in te, ego nunquam scandalizabor”; et infra: “Etiamsi oportuerit me mori tecum, non te negabo”. 14. Et hoc etiam contestatur Marcus; Lucas vero scribit Petrum etiam dixisse Cristo, parum supra verba premissa de gladiis: “Domine, tecum paratus

sum in carcerem et in mortem ire”. 15. Iohannes autem dicit de illo quod, cum Cristus vellet sibi lavare pedes, Petrus ait: “Domine, tu michi lavas pedes?”; et infra: “Non lavabis michi pedes in ecternum”. 16. Dicit etiam ipsum gladio percussisse ministri servum: quod etiam conscribunt omnes quatuor. Dicit etiam Iohannes ipsum introivisse subito, cum venit in monumentum, videns alium discipulum cunctantem ad hostium. Dicit iterum quod, existente Iesu in litore post resurrectionem, “Cum Petrus audisset quia Dominus est, tunica succinxit se, erat enim nudus, et misit se in mare”. Ultimo dicit quod, cum Petrus vidisset Iohannem, dixit Iesu: “Domine, hic autem quid?”. 17. Iuvat quippe talia de Archimandrita nostro in laudem sue puritatis continuasse, in quibus aperte deprehenditur quod, cum de duobus gladiis loquebatur, intentione simplici respondebat ad Cristum. 18. Quod si verba illa Cristi et Petri typice sunt accipienda, non ad hoc quod dicunt isti trahenda sunt, sed referenda sunt ad sensum illius gladii de quo scribit Matheus sic: “Nolite ergo arbitrari quia veni mictere pacem in terram: non veni pacem mictere, sed gladium. Veni enim separare hominem adversus patrem suum” *etc*. 19. Quod quidem fit tam verbo quam opere; propter quod dicebat Lucas ad Theophilum “que cepit Iesus facere et docere”. Talem gladium Cristus emere precipiebat, quem duplicem ibi esse Petrus etiam respondebat. Ad verba enim et opera parati erant, per que facerent quod Cristus dicebat se venisse facturum per gladium, ut dictum est.

X. 1. Dicunt adhuc quidam quod Constantinus imperator, mundatus a lepra intercessione Silvestri tunc summi Pontificis Imperii sedem, scilicet Romam, donavit Ecclesie cum multis aliis Imperii dignitatibus. 2. Ex quo arguunt dignitates illas deinde neminem assummere posse nisi ab Ecclesia recipiat, cuius eas esse dicunt; et ex hoc bene sequeretur auctoritatem unam ab alia dipendere, ut ipsi volunt. 3. Positis et solutis igitur argumentis que radices in divinis eloquiis habere videbantur, restant nunc illa ponenda et solvenda que in gestis humanis et ratione humana radicantur. Ex quibus primum est quod premictitur, quod sic sillogizant: ‘ea que sunt Ecclesie nemo de iure habere potest nisi ab Ecclesia’ — et hoc conceditur— ‘romanum regimen est Ecclesie: ergo ipsum nemo habere potest de iure nisi ab Ecclesia’; et minorem probant per ea que de Constantino superius tacta sunt. 4. Hanc ergo minorem interimo et, cum probant, dico quod sua probatio nulla est, quia Constantinus alienare non poterat Imperii dignitatem, nec Ecclesia recipere. 5. Et cum pertinaciter instant, quod dico sic ostendi potest: nemini licet ea tacere per offitium sibi deputatum que sunt contra illud offitium; quia sic idem, in quantum idem, esset contrarium sibi ipsi: quod est inpossibile; sed contra offitium deputatum Imperatori est scindere Imperium, cum offitium eius sit humanum genus uni velle et uni nolle tenere subiectum, ut in primo huius de facili videri potest; ergo scindere Imperium Imperatori non

licet. 6. Si ergo alique dignitates per Constantinum essent alienate — ut dicunt — ab Imperio, et cessissent in potestatem Ecclesie, scissa esset tunica inconsutilis, quam scindere ausi non sunt etiam qui Cristum verum Deum lancea perforarunt. 7. Preterea, sicut Ecclesia suum habet fundamentum, sic et Imperium suum. Nam Ecclesie fundamentum Cristus est; unde Apostolus ad Corinthios: “Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere preter id quod positum est, quod est Cristus Iesus”. Ipse est petra super quam hedificata est Ecclesia. Imperii vero fundamentum ius humanum est. 8. Modo dico quod, sicut Ecclesie fondamento suo contrariari non licet, sed debet semper inniti super illud iuxta illud Canticorum “Que est ista, que ascendit de deserto delitiis affluens, innixa super dilectum?”, sic et Imperio licitum non est contra ius humanum aliquid tacere. Sed contra ius humanum esset, si se ipsum Imperium destrueret: ergo Imperio se ipsum destruere non licet. 9. Cum ergo scindere Imperium esset destruere ipsum, consistente Imperio in unitate Monarchie universalis, manifestum est quod Imperii auctoritate fungenti scindere Imperium non licet. Quod autem destruere Imperium sit contra ius humanum, ex superioribus est manifestum. 10. Preterea, omnis iurisdictio prior est suo iudice: iudex enim ad iurisdictionem ordinatur, et non e converso; sed Imperium est iurisdictio omnem temporalem iurisdictionem ambitu suo comprehendens: ergo ipsa est prior suo iudice, qui est Imperator, quia ad ipsam Imperator est ordinatus, et non e converso. Ex quo patet quod Imperator ipsam permutare non potest in quantum Imperator, cum ab ea recipiat esse quod est. 11. Modo dico sic: aut ille Imperator erat cum dicitur Ecclesie contulisse, aut non; et si non, planum est quod nichil poterat de Imperio conferre; si sic, cum talis collatio esset minoratio iurisdictionis, in quantum Imperator hoc facere non poterat. 12. Amplius, si unus Imperatot aliquam particulam ab Imperii iurisdictione discindere posset, cadem ratione et alius. Et cum iurisdictio temporalis finita sit et omne finitum per finitas decisiones assummatur, sequeretur quod iurisdictio prima posset annichilari: quod est irrationabile. 13. Adhuc, cum conferens habeat se per modum agentis et cui confertur per modum patientis, ut placet Phylosopho in quarto ad Nicomacum, non solum ad collationem esse licitam requiritur dispositio conferentis, sed etiam eius cui conf»rtur: videtur enim in patiente et disposito actus activorum inesse. 14. Sed Ecclesia omnino indisposita erat ad temporalia recipienda per preceptum prohibitivum expressum, ut habemus per Matheum sic : “Nolite possidere aurum, neque argentum, neque pecuniam in zonis vestris, non peram in via” *etc.* Nam etsi per Lucam habemus relaxationem precepti quantum ad quedam, ad possessionem tamen auri et argenti licentiatam Ecclesiam post prohibitionem illam invenire non potui. 15. Qua re, si Ecclesia recipere non poterat, dato quod Constantinus hoc facere potuisset de se, actio

tamen illa non erat possibilis propter patientis indispositionem. Patet igitur quod nec Ecclesia recipere per modum possessionis, nec ille conferre per modum alienationis poterat. 16. Poterat tamen Imperator in patrocinium Ecclesie Patrimonium et alia deputare, inmoto semper superiori dominio, cuius unitas divisionem non patitur. 17. Poterat et vicarius Dei recipere non tanquam possessor, sed tanquam fructuum pro Ecclesia pro Cristi pauperibus dispensator: quod apostolos fecisse non ignoratur. 18. Adhuc dicunt quod Adrianus papa Carolum Magnum sibi et Ecclesie advocavit ob iniuriam Longobardorum, tempore Desiderii regis eorum; et quod Carolus ab eo recepit Imperii dignitatem non obstante quod Michael imperabat apud Constantinopolim. 19. Propter quod dicunt quod omnes qui fuerunt Romanorum Imperatores post ipsum, et ipsi advocati Ecclesie sunt et debent ab Ecclesia advocari: ex quo etiam sequeretur illa dependentia quam concludere volunt. 20. Et ad hoc infringendum dico quod nichil dicunt: usurpatio enim iuris non facit ius. Nam si sic, eodem modo auctoritas Ecclesie probaretur dipendere ab Imperatore, postquam Octo imperator Leonem papam restituit et Benedictum deposuit, necnon in exilium in Saxoniam duxit.

XI. 1. Ratione vero sic arguunt. Summunt etenim sibi principium de decimo Prime phylosophie dicentes: omnia que sunt unius generis reducuntur ad unum, quod est mensura omnium que sub illo genere sunt; sed omnes homines sunt unius generis: ergo debent reduci ad unum, tanquam ad mensuram omnium eorum. 2. Et cum summus Antistes et Imperator sint homines, si conclusio illa est vera, oportet quod reducantur ad unum hominem. Et cum Papa non sit reducendus ad alium, relinquitur quod Imperator cum omnibus aliis sit reducendus ad ipsum, tanquam ad mensuram et regulam: propter quod sequitur etiam idem quod volunt. 3. Ad hanc rationem solvendam dico quod, cum dicunt ‘Ea que sunt unius generis oportet reduci ad aliquod unum de illo genere, quod est metrum in ipso’, verum dicunt. Et similiter verum dicunt dicentes quod omnes homines sunt unius generis; et similiter verum concludunt cum inferunt ex hiis omnes homines esse reducendos ad unum metrum in suo genere. Sed cum ex hac conclusione subinferunt de Papa et Imperatore, falluntur ‘secundum accidens’. 4. Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum quod aliud est esse hominem et aliud est esse Papam; et eodem modo aliud est esse hominem, aliud esse Imperatorem, sicut aliud est esse hominem, et aliud est esse patrem et dominum. 5. Homo enim est id quod est per formam substantialem, per quam sortitur spetiem et genus, et per quam reponitur sub predicamento substantie; pater vero est id quod est per formam accidentalem, que est relatio per quam sortitur spetiem quandam et genus, et reponitur sub genere ‘ad aliquid’, sive ‘relationis’. Aliter omnia reducerentur ad predicamentum substantie, cum nulla forma

accidentalis per se subsistat absque ypostasi substantie subsistentis: quod est falsum. 6. Cum ergo Papa et Imperator sint id quod sunt per quasdam relationes, quia per Papatum et per Imperiatum, que relationes sunt altera sub ambitu paternitatis et altera sub ambitu dominationis, manifestum est quod Papa et Imperator, in quantum huiusmodi, habent reponi sub predicamento relationis, et per consequens reduci ad aliquod existens sub illo genere. 7. Unde dico quod alia est mensura ad quam habent reduci prout sunt homines, et alia prout sunt et Papa et Imperator. Nam, prout sunt homines, habent reduci ad optimum hominem, qui est mensura omnium aliorum, et ydea ut dicam — quisquis ille sit — ad existentem maxime unum in genere suo ut haberi potest ex ultimis ad Nicomacum. 8. In quantum vero sunt relativa quedam, ut patet, reducenda sunt vel ad invicem, si alterum subalternatur alteri vel in spetie comunicant per naturam relationis, vel ad aliquod tertium, ad quod reducantur tanquam ad comunem unitatem. 9. Sed non potest dici quod alterum subalternetur alteri, quia sic alterum de altero predicaretur: quod est falsum; non enim dicimus ‘Imperator est Papa’, nec e converso. Nec potest dici quod comunicent in spetie, cum alia sit ratio Pape, alia Imperatoris, in quantum huiusmodi. ergo reducuntur ad aliquid in quo habent uniri. 10. Propter quod sciendum quod, sicut se habet relatio ad relationem, sic relativum ad relativum. Si ergo Papatus et Imperiatus, cum sint relationes superpositionis, habeant reduci ad respectum superpositionis, a quo respectu cum suis differentialibus descendunt, Papa et Imperator, cum sint relativa, reduci habebunt ad aliquod unum in quo reperiatur ipse respectus superpositionis absque differentialibus aliis. 11. Et hoc erit vel ipse Deus, in quo respectus omnis universaliter unitur, vel aliqua substantia Deo inferiori in qua respectus superpositionis per differentiam superpositionis a simplici respectu descendens particuletur. 12. Et sic patet quod Papa et Imperator, in quantum homines, habent reduci ad unum; in quantum vero Papa et Imperator, ad aliud: et per hoc patet ad rationem.

XII. 1. Positis et exclusis erroribus quibus potissime innituntur qui romani Principatus auctoritatem dependere dicunt a romano Pontifice, redeundum est ad ostendendum veritatem huius tertie questionis, que a principio discutienda proponebatur: que quidem veritas apparebit sufficienter si, sub prefixo principio inquirendo, prefatam auctoritatem immediate dipendere a culmine totius entis ostendero, qui Deus est. 2. Et hoc erit ostensum vel si auctoritas Ecclesie removeatur ab illa — cum de alia non sit altercatio — vel si ‘ostensive’ probetur a Deo immediate dependere. 3. Quod autem auctoritas Ecclesie non sit causa imperialis auctoritatis probatur sic: illud, quo non esistente aut quo non virtuante, aliud habet totam suam virtutem, non est causa illius virtutis; sed, Ecclesia non esistente aut non virtuante, Imperium habuit totam suam virtutem:

ergo Ecclesia non est causa virtutis Imperii et per consequens nec auctoritatis, cum idem sit virtus et auctoritas eius. 4. Sit Ecclesia A, Imperium B, auctoritas sive virtus Imperii C; si, non existente A, C est in B, inpossibile est A esse causam eius quod est C esse in B, cum inpossibile sit effectum precedere causam in esse. Adhuc si, nichil operante A, C est in B, necesse est A non esse causam eius quod est C esse in B, cum necesse sit ad productionem effectus preoperari causam, presertim efficientem, de qua intenditur. 5. Maior propositio huius demonstrationis declarata est in terminis; minorem Cristus et Ecclesia confirmat. Cristus nascendo et moriendo, ut superius dictum est: Ecclesia, cum Paulus in Actibus Apostolorum dicat ad Festum: “Ad tribunal Cesaris sto, ubi me oportet iudicari”; cum etiam angelus Dei Paulo dixerit parum post: “Ne timeas, Paule, Cesari te oportet assistere”; et infra iterum Paulus ad Iudeos existentes in Ytalia: “Contradicentibus autem Iudeis, coactus sum appellare Cesarem, non quasi gentem meam habens aliquid accusare, sed ut eruerem animam meam de morte”. 6. Quod si Cesar iam tunc iudicandi temporalia non habuisset auctoritatem nec Cristus hoc persuasisset, nec angelus illa verba nuntiasset, nec ille qui dicebat “Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Cristo” incompetentem iudicem appellasset. 7. Si etiam Constantinus auctoritatem non habuisset, in patrocinium Ecclesie illa que de Imperio deputavit ei de iure deputare non potuisset; et sic Ecclesia illa collatione uteretur iniuste, cum Deus velit oblationes esse inmaculatas iuxta illud Levitici: “Omnis oblatio, quam conferetis Domino, absque fermento erit”. 8. Quod quidem preceptum, licet ad offerentes faciem habere videatur, nichilominus est per consequens ad recipientes; stultum enim est credere Deum velle recipi quod prohibet exhiberi, cum etiam in eodem precipiatur Levitis: “Nolite contaminare animas vestras nec tangatis quicquid eorum, ne inmundi sitis”. 9. Sed dicere quod Ecclesia sic abutatur patrimonio sibi deputato est valde inconveniens: ergo falsum erat illud ex quo sequebatur.

XIII. 1. Amplius, si Ecclesia virtutem haberet auctorizandi romanum Principem, aut haberet a Deo, aut a se, aut ab Imperatore aliquo aut ab universo mortalium assensu, vel saltem ex illis prevalentium: nulla est alia rimula, per quam virtus hec ad Ecclesiam manare potuisset; sed a nullo istorum habet: ergo virtutem predictam non habet. 2. Quod autem a nullo istorum habeat sic apparet. Nam si a Deo recepisset, hoc fuisset aut per legem divinam aut per naturalem, quia quod a natura recipitur a Deo recipitur, non tamen convertitur. 3. Sed non per naturalem, quia natura non imponit legem nisi suis effectibus, cum Deus insufficiens esse non possit ubi sine secundis agentibus aliquid in esse producit. Unde, cum Ecclesia non sit effectus nature, sed Dei dicentis “Super hanc petram hedificabo Ecclesiam meam”, et alibi “Opus consummavi quod dedisti michi ut faciam”, manifestum est quod ei natura legem non dedit. 4. Sed nec per divinam: omnis

nanque divina lex duorum Testamentorum gremio continetur; in quo quidem gremio reperire non possum temporalium sollicitudinem sive curam sacerdotio primo vel novissimo commendatam fuisse. 5. Quinymo invenio sacerdotes primos ab illa de precepto remotos, ut patet per ea que Deus ad Moysen; et sacerdotes novissimos, per ea que Cristus ad discipulos: quam quidem ab eis esse remotam possibile non est, si regiminis temporalis auctoritas a sacerdotio demanaret, cum saltem in auctorizando sollicitudo provisionis instaret, et deinde cautela continua ne auctorizatus a tramite rectitudinis deviaret. 6. Quod autem a se non receperit de facili patet. Nichil est quod dare possit quod non habet; unde omne agens aliquid actu esse tale oportet quale agere intendit, ut habetur in hiis que De simpliciter ente. Sed constat quod, si Ecclesia sibi dedit illam virtutem, non habebat illam priusquam daret; et sic dedisset sibi quod non habebat; quod est inpossibile. 7. Quod vero ab aliquo Imperatore non receperit, per ea que superius manifesta sunt patet sufficienter. Et quod etiam ab assensu omnium vel prevalentium non habuerit quis dubitat, cum non modo Asyani et Affricani omnes, quinetiam maior pars Europam colentium hoc aborreat? Fastidium etenim est in rebus manifestissimis probationes adducere.

XIV. 1. Item, illud quod est contra naturam alicuius non est de numero suarum virtutum, cum virtutes uniuscuiusque rei consequantur naturam eius propter finis adeptionem; sed virtus auctorizandi regnum nostre mortalitatis est contra naturam Ecclesie: ergo non est de numero virtutum suarum. 2. Ad evidentiam autem minoris sciendum quod natura Ecclesie forma est Ecclesie: nam, quamvis natura dicatur de materia et forma, per prius tamen dicitur de forma, ut ostensum est in Naturali auditu. 3. Forma autem Ecclesie nichil aliud est quam vita Cristi, tam in dictis quam in factis comprehensa : vita enim ipsius ydea fuit et exemplar militantis Ecclesie, presertim pastorum, maxime summi, cuius est pascere agnos et oves. 4. Unde ipse in Iohanne formam sue vite relinquens “Exemplum” inquit “dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis”; et spetialiter ad Petrum, postquam pastoris offitium sibi commisit, ut in eodem habemus, “Petre”, inquit “sequere me”. 5. Sed Cristus huiusmodi regimen coram Pilato abnegavit: “Regnum” inquit” meum non est de hoc mundo; si ex hoc mundo esset regnum meum, ministri mei utique decertarent ut non traderer Iudeis; nunc autem regnum meum non est hinc”. 6. Quod non sic intelligendum est ac si Cristus, qui Deus est, non sit dominus regni huius; cum Psalmista dicat “quoniam ipsius est mare, et ipse fecit illud, et aridam fundaverunt manus eius”; sed quia, ut exemplar Ecclesie, regni huius curam non habebat. 7. Velut si aureum sigillum loqueretur de se dicens ‘non sum mensura in aliquo genere’; quod quidem dictum non habet locum in quantum est aurum, cum sit metrum in genere metallorum, sed in quantum est quoddam signum receptibile per

impressionem. 8. Formale igitur est Ecclesie illud idem dicere, illud idem sentire: oppositum autem dicere vel sentire, contrarium forme, ut patet, sive nature, quod idem est. 9. Ex quo colligitur quod virtus auctorizandi regnum hoc sit contra naturam Ecclesie: contrarietas enim in oppinione vel dicto sequitur ex contrarietate que est in re dicta vel oppinata, sicut verum et falsum ab esse rei vel non esse in oratione causatur, ut doctrina Predicamentorum nos docet. 10. Sufficienter igitur per argumenta superiora ducendo ‘ad inconveniens’ probatum est auctoritatem Imperii ab Ecclesia minime dipendere.

XV. 1. Licet in precedenti capitulo ducendo ‘ad inconveniens’ ostensum sit auctoritatem Imperii ab auctoritate summi Pontificis non causari, non tamen omnino probatum est ipsam inmediate dependere a Deo, nisi ex consequenti. Consequens enim est si ab ipso Dei vicario non dependet, quod a Deo dependeat. 2. Et ideo, ad perfectam determinationem propositi, ‘ostensive’ probandum est Imperatorem, sive mundi Monarcham, immediate se habere ad principem universi, qui Deus est. 3. Ad huius autem intelligentiam sciendum quod homo solus in entibus tenet medium corruptibilium et incorruptibilium; propter quod recte a phylosophis assimilatur orizonti, qui est medium duorum emisperiorum. 4. Nam homo, si consideretur secundum utranque partem essentialem, scilicet animam et corpus, corruptibilis est; si consideretur tantum secundum unam, scilicet animam, incorruptibilis est. Propter quod bene Phylosophus inquit de ipsa, prout incorruptibilis est, in secundo De anima cum dixit: “Et solum hoc contingit separari, tanquam perpetuum, a corruptibili”. 5. Si ergo homo medium quoddam est corruptibilium et incorruptibilium, cum omne medium sapiat naturam extremorum, necesse est hominem sapere utranque naturam. 6. Et cum omnis natura ad ultimum quendam finem ordinetur, consequitur ut hominis duplex finis existat : ut, sicut inter omnia entia solus incorruptibilitatem et corruptibilitatem partecipat, sic solus inter omnia entia in duo ultima ordinetur, quorum alterum sit finis eius prout corruptibilis est, alterum vero prout incorruptibilis. 7. Duos igitur fines providentia illa inenarrabilis homini proposuit intendendos : beatitudinem scilicet huius vite, que in operatione proprie virtutis consistit et per terrestrem paradisum figuratur; et beatitudinem vite ecterne, que consistit in fruitione divini aspectus ad quam propria virtus ascendere non potest, nisi lumine divino adiuta, que per paradisum celestem intelligi datur. 8. Ad has quidem beatitudines, velut ad diversas conclusiones, per diversa media venire oportet. Nam ad primam per phylosophica documenta venimus, dummodo illa sequamur secundum virtutes morales et intellectuales operando; ad secundam vero per documenta spiritualia que humanam rationem transcendunt, dummodo illa sequamur secundum virtutes theologicas operando, fidem spem scilicet et karitatem. 9. Has igitur conclusiones et media, licet

ostensa sint nobis hec ab humana ratione que per phylosophos tota nobis innotuit, hec a Spiritu Sancto qui per prophetas et agiographos, qui per coecternum sibi Dei filium Iesum Cristum et per eius discipulos supernaturalem veritatem ac nobis necessariam revelavit, humana cupiditas postergaret nisi homines, tanquam equi, sua bestialitate vagantes “in camo et freno” compescerentur in via. 10. Propter quod opus fuit homini duplici directivo secundum duplicem finem: scilicet summo Pontifice, qui secundum revelata humanum genus perduceret ad vitam ecternam, et Imperatore, qui secundum phylosophica documenta genus humanum ad temporalem felicitatem dirigeret. 11. Et cum ad hunc portum vel nulli vel pauci, et hii cum difficultate nimia, pervenire possint, nisi sedatis fluctibus blande cupiditatis genus humanum liberum in pacis tranquillitate quiescat, hoc est illud signum ad quod maxime debet intendere curator orbis, qui dicitur romanus Princeps, ut scilicet in areola ista mortalium libere cum pace vivatur. 12. Cumque dispositio mundi huius dispositionem inherentem celorum circulationi sequatur, necesse est ad hoc ut utilia documenta libertatis et pacis commode locis et temporibus applicentur, de curatore isto dispensari ab Illo qui totalem celorum dispositionem presentialiter intuetur. Hic autem est solus ille qui hanc preordinavit, ut per ipsam ipse providens suis ordinibus queque connecteret. 13. Quod si ita est, solus eligit Deus, solus ipse confirmat, cum superiorem non habeat. Ex quo haberi potest ulterius quod nec isti qui nunc, nec alii cuiuscunque modi dicti fuerint ‘electores’, sic dicendi sunt: quin potius ‘denuntiatores divine providentie’ sunt habendi. 14. Unde fit quod aliquando patiantur dissidium quibus denuntiandi dignitas est indulta, vel quia omnes vel quia quidam eorum, nebula cupiditatis ottenebrati, divine dispensationis faciem non discernunt. 15. Sic ergo patet quod auctoritas temporalis Monarche sine ullo medio in ipsum de Fonte universalis auctoritatis descendit: qui quidem Fons, in arce sue simplicitatis unitus, in multiplices alveos influit ex habundantia bonitatis. 16. Et iam satis videor metam actigisse propositam. Enucleata nanque veritas est questionis illius qua querebatur utrum ad bene esse mundi necessarium esset Monarche offitium, ac illius qua querebatur an romanus populus de iure Imperium sibi asciverit, nec non illius ultime qua querebatur an Monarche auctoritas a Deo vel ab alio dependeret inmediate. 17. Que quidem veritas ultime questionis non sic stricte recipienda est, ut romanus Princeps in aliquo romano Pontifici non subiaceat, cum mortalis ista felicitas quodammodo ad inmortalem felicitatem ordinetur. 18. Illa igitur reverentia Cesar utatur ad Petrum qua primogenitus illius debet uti ad patrem: ut luce paterne gratie illustratus virtuosius orbem terre irradiet, cui ab Illo solo prefectus est, qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator.

IL DE MONARCHIA (TRADUZIONE) di Marsilio Ficino

Marsilio Ficino è stato un filosofo e umanista italiano. Nato dal medico personale di Cosimo il Vecchio, Diotifeci d'Agnolo, e da Alessandra di Nanoccio, studia a Firenze sotto Luca de Bernardi e Comando Comandi e apprende le prime nozioni di greco da Francesco da Castiglione, mentre è da smentire la notizia riportata nella Vita Ficini di Giovanni Corsi, scritta del 1506, che sia stato allievo del Platina. Ficino published this celebrated translation of Dante's famous treatise in 1468.

Ficino pubblicato questa celebrata traduzione del famoso trattato di Dante nel 1468.

Busto di Marsilio Ficino ad opera di Andrea Ferrucci, 1522

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Capitolo XV.

Prohemiodi *Marsilio Ficino florentinosopra la Monarchia di Dante,tradotta da ·llui di latino in lingua toschana,a Bernardo del Nero et Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, ciptadini florentini.*

Dante Alighieri, per patria celeste, per abitatione florentino, di stirpe angelico, in professione philosopho poeticho, benché non parlassi in lingua grecha con quel sacro padre de' philosophi interpetre della verità, Platone, nientedimeno inn– ispirito parlò in modo con lui che di molte sententie platoniche adornò e libri suoi; et per tale hornamento massime inlustrò tanto la ciptà florentina che ·ccosì bene Firenze di Dante, come Dante da Firenze, si può dire. Tre regni troviamo scripti dal nostro rettissimo duce Platone: uno de' beati, l'altro de' miseri, el terzo de' peregrini. Beati chiama quelli che ·ssono alla ciptà di vita restituti; miseri quelli che per senpre ne sono privati; peregrini quelli che fuori di detta ciptà sono, ma none iudicati in senpiterno exilio. In questo terzo ordine pone tutti e viventi, et de' morti quella parte che a tenporale purgatione è deputata. Questo hordine platonico prima seguì Virgilio; questo sequì Dante dipoi, col vaso di Vergilio beendo alle platoniche fonti. Et però del regnio de' beati et de' miseri et de' peregrini di questa vita passati nelle sue *Commedie* eleghantemente tractò; et del regnio de' peregrini viventi nel libro da ·llui chiamato *Monarchia*, ove prima disputa dovere essere uno iusto inperadore di tutti gli huomini; dipoi agugnie questo appartenersi al popolo romano; hultimo pruova che detto inperio dal sommo Iddio sanza mezo del papa dipende. Questo libro conposto da Dante in lingua latina, acciò che sia a più leggenti chomune, Marsilio vostro, dilettissimi miei, da voi exortato, di lingua latina in toscana tradocto a voi diriza. L'antiqua nostra amicitia et disputatione di simile cose intra noi frequentata richiede che prima con voi questa tradutione comunichi, et voi agli altri dipoi, se vi pare, ne facciate parte.

LIBRO I

Capitolo I.

Cominca la Monarchia di Dante Alighieri, et prima el proemiodov'egli anunzia dovere dare notitia di detta tenporale monarchia.

El principale huficio di tutti gli huomini, i quali dalla natura superiore sono tirati ad amare la verità, pare che ·ssia questo: che ·ccome loro sono aricchiti per la fatica degli antichi, così s'affatichino di dare delle medesime riccheze a quelli che dopo loro verranno. Perché molto di lungi è dallo huficio dello huomo colui che, amaestrato di publiche dotrine, non si cura di quelle alcuno frutto alla repubricha conferire. Costui non è e legnio, el quale, piantato presso al corso delle aque, nel debito tenpo frutti produce, ma è più tosto pestilentiale voragine, la quale senpre inghiottisce et mai non rende. Pensando io questo spesse volte, acciò che mai non fussi ripreso del nascoso talento, ho desiderio di dare a' posteri non solamente copiosa dimostratione, ma etiandio frutto, et dimostrare quelle verità che non sono dagli altri tentate. Inperò che nessuno fructo produrebbe colui che di nuovo dimostrassi una propositione da Euclide dimostrata; e ·ccolui che ·ssi sforzassi di dichiarare la felicità da Aristotile gà dichiarata; et colui che volessi difendere la vecchiaia gà difesa da Cecerone. El sermone di costui superfluo più tosto parturirebbe fastidio che fructo alcuno. Et tra ·ll'altre verità occulte et hutili la notitia della tenporale monarchia è hutilissima et molto nascosa, et non mai d'âlcuno tentata, non vi si vedendo dentro guadagnio; e però il proposito mio è di trarre questa delle tenebre alla lucie, acciò che io m'affatichi per dare al mondo hutilità, et primo la palma in questo esercitio a mia gloria conseguiti. Certamente grande hopera et dificile et sopra le forze mie incominco, confidandomi non tanto nella propia virtù, quanto nel lume di quello donatore «che dà a ogniuno abondantemente et non rinpruovera».

Capitolo II.

Notitia che ·cchosa sia la tenporale monarchia.

Prima è da vedere brievemente che ·ccosa sia la tenporale monarchia. La monarchia tenporale, la quale si chiama ‘inperio’, è uno principato hunicho et sopra tutti gli altri nel tenpo, overo in quelle cose che ·ssono nel tenpo misurate. Nella quale tre dubbi si muovono: prima si dubita et domandasi s’ella è a bene essere del mondo necessaria; secondo, se il romano populo ragonevolmente s’atribuì l’uficio della monarchia; terzo, se ·lla autorità della monarchia dipenda sanza mezo da ·dDio o d’alcuno ministro suo hovero vichario. Ma perché ogni verità che nonn–è prencipio si manifesta per la verità d’alcuno prencipio, è necessario in cascheduna inquisitione avere notitia del prencipio al quale si ricorra per certificarsi in tutte le propositioni che dopo quella si pigliano. E però, essendo el presente tractato una certa inquisitione, in prima è da cercare del prencipio, nella verità del quale le cose inferiori consistano.

Capitolo III .

Che la presente materia nonn–è solamente civile,ma fonte di civilità, et principalmente all'operatione ordinata.

È da sapere che alcune cose sono che non sono sottoposte alla podestà nostra, le quali possiamo solamente ricerchare et conoscere, ma none hoperarle: come sono le cose d'arismetricha et geometria et simili, et naturali et logiche et divine. Altre cose sono alla nostra potestà subgepte, le quali non solo conoscere ma etiandio hoperare possiamo, et in queste non si piglia la operatione per la cognitione, ma la cognitione più tosto per la hoperatione, inperò che inn–esse el fine è operare. Adunque, essendo la presente materia civile, anzi fonte et prencipio d'ogni repta civilità, et le cose civili essendo alla podestà nostra subgiepte, è manifesto che ·lla presente materia nonn–è principalmente alla cognitione ma alla operatione hordinata. Ancora, perché nelle operationi el prencipio et la cagione di tutto è l'ultimo fine, el quale muove colui che fa, è ragonevole che tutta la ragone di quelle cose che ·ssono a ·ffine hordinate, da esso fine si pigli. Perché sarà altro modo di tagliare e ·legniame a ·ffine d'edificare la casa, et altro a ·ffine di fare la nave. Et però quello, che è hultimo fine di civilità della generatione humana, sarà questo prencipio pel quale tutte le cose che di sotto si pruovano sufficientemente si manifesteranno. E nonn–è ragonevole che ·ss'egli è certo fine di questa et di quella civilità, non sia ancora di tutte le civilità un fine comune.

Capitolo IV .

Dichiara quale è l'ultimo fine della civiltà.

Abbiàno a dichiarare qual sia della civilità el fine hultimo, et, veduto questo, secondo il Filosopho nella *Eticha*, sarà più che 'l mezo della hopera adenpiuto. Alla dichiaratione di questo che si cerca, si debba considerare che ·ccome è alcuno fine al quale la natura produce un dito della mano, et altrofine al quale produce tutta la mano, et altro al quale el braccio, et altro al quale tutto lo huomo; così è altro fine al quale ella producie huno huomo, et altro al quale ella hordina la famiglia, altro al quale la vicinanza, altro al quale la ciptà, et altro al quale el regnio, et finalmente huno hultimo fine al quale Iddio eterno coll'arte sua, che è la natura, produce inn–essere la generatione humana. Et questo qui si cercha come prencipio che dirizi tutta questa nostra inquisitione. In prima si vuole intendere che Dio et la natura nulla fanno hotioso, ma ciò che producono inn–essere è a qualche hoperatione hordinato.

Perché nonn–è quella essentia creata l'ultimo fine della intentione del creante in quanto egli è creatore, ma la propia hoperatione della essentia. Di qui nasce che la hoperatione propia non è a ·ffine della essentia, ma la essentia è a ·ffine della propia hoperatione. è adunque alcuna propia hoperatione della humana huniversità, alla quale tutta questa università è in tanta moltitudine hordinata, alla quale hoperatione né uno huomo, né una casa, né una vicinanza, né una ciptà, né uno regnio particulare può pervenire. Qual sia questa hoperatione sarà manifesto se la ultima potenza di tutta la umanità apparirà. Dico adunque che nessuna forza participata da più, diversi inn–ispetie, è di potenza d'alcuna di quelle, inperò che quella sarebbe con più spetie specificata; e questo è inpossibile. Non è adunque l'ultima forza nello huomo l'essere, semplicemente preso, perché così sunto è ancora agli elementi comune; né anche l'essere conpressionato, perché questo ancora nelle cose naturali si truova; né l'essere aprensivo, perché questo è ancora ne' bruti; ma essere aprensivo per lo intelletto possibile, el quale essere non si conviene ad alcuna cosa o supperiore o inferiore altro che allo huomo. E benché sieno altre essentie che participano intelletto, nientedimeno lo intelletto loro non si dice intelletto possibile come quello dello huomo; perché tali essentie sono certe spetie intellettuali et none altro, e l'essere loro non è altro che intendere che è quello ch'elle sono, e questo fanno sanza intermessione, altrimenti non sarebbonoeterne. Per questo è manifesto che l'ultimo della potentia humana è potentia ho virtù intellettiva. E perché questa potenza per uno huomo o per alcuna particulare congregatione di huomini tutta

non può essere inn–atto ridotta, è necessario che sia moltitudine nella humana generatione per la quale tutta la potenza sua in uno atto si riduca; così ancora è necessario che sia nelle cose che ·ss'ingenerano moltitudine, acciò che tutta la potentia della materia prima sotto l'atto senpre sia, altrimenti sarebbe una potentia dall'atto separata, la qual cosa è inpossibile. In questa sententia fu Averois nel comento *Della Anima*. Certamente la potenza intellectiva della quale io parlo non solo si dirizza alle forme universali et alla spetie, ma etiandio alle particulari per una certa extensione, coè distendimento; honde si suole dire che ·llo intelletto speculativo per estensione diventa intelletto pratico, el fine del quale è tractare et fare. Tractare, dicho, prudentemente le cose civili, et fare con arte le cose mecchaniche; le quali cose tutte servono a lo huomo contemplante, come a hottimo stato al quale la prima bontà inn–essere produsse la generatione humana. Per questo gà è manifesto quello che nella *Politicha* d'Aristotile si dicie, che quegli huomini che sopra gli altri hanno vigore d'intelletto sono degli altri per natura signiori.

Capitolo V .

Come cholla pacie la generatione humana viene alla sua tranquilità.

Assai è dichiarato che ·lla propria hoperatione della humana generatione tutta insieme sunta è riducere inn–atto senpre tutta la potenza dello intelletto possibile, prima a conten-plare, secondario per questo ad operare per la extensione sua. E perché come è nella parte, così è nel tutto, e nello huomo particulare adiviene che sedendosi et riposandosi prudentemente s’adopera, è manifesto che ·lla generatione humana nella sua quiete e in tranquillità di pacie alla sua propia operatione perviene, la quale è quasi hoperatione divina, secondo el detto di David: «Poco minore facesti lo huomo che gli angeli». Sicché è manifesto che ·lla huniversale pacie tra ·ttutte le cose è la più hottima a ·cconseguitare la humana beatitudine. Di qui avenne che sopra e pastori venne da cielo hun suono che non disse richeze, piaceri, honori, lungha vita, sanità, ghagliardia, belleza, ma disse pacie; perché disse la celestiale conpagnia «Sia gloria in cielo a Dio et in terra agli huomini di buona volontà sia pacie». Et questa era ancora la propia salutatione del Salvatore: «A voi sia pacie», perché era conveniente al sommo Salvatore expriemere huna salutatione somma; el quale costume servorono di poi e suoi discepoli, et Paulo nelle salutationi sue, come a cascheduno essere può manifesto.

Capitolo VI .

Come la pacie si dee tenere per segnio stabile et ordinato,al quale cò che si pruova si riducha come a una verità manifesta.

Per queste cose che ·ssono dichiarate è manifesto per che mezo ottimamente la generatione humana alla sua propia operatione perviene; et conseguentemente s’è veduto quale è el mezo prossimo et comodissimo pel quale si viene a quello a ·cche, come hultimo fine, tutte le nostre hoperationi sono hordinate. Questa è la pace huniversale, la quale per principio delle seguenti ragioni ferma si vuole tenere, quasi huno segnio prefisso al quale cò che ·ssi pruova si riducha, come a una verità manifestissima.

Capitolo VII .

Se al bene essere del mondo la tenporale monarchia è ordinata.

Risummendo quello che da prencipio dicemo, tre cose massimamente si dubitano circha la monarchia tenporale, laquale per comune vocabolo si chiama `inperio'; e di queste cose col prencipio assegnato et hordine dato vogliamo tractare. La prima quistione è questa: se al bene essere del mondo la tenporale monarchia è necessaria. Questo, non ostante alcuna forza di ragone o d'alturità, con potentissimi et validissimi argumenti si può mostrare; el prencipio de' quali si può asummere nella *Politicha* d'Aristotile; hove e' dicie che quando più cose a uno sono hordinate, conviene che una di loro regoli et reggha, et l'altre cose sieno regholate et rette. A questa sentenzia dà fede non solamente l'autorità dello autore, ma etiandio la ragone per caschedune cose discorente. Considera questo nello huomo, nel quale tutte le forze sue sono alla felicità hordinate, et la forza intellettuale di tutte l'altre è regulatrice et regina: altrimenti non potrebbe alla felicità pervenire. Ancora, nella casa el fine è preparare la famiglia al bene vivere. Huno bisognia che vi sia che reguli et regha, el quale padre di famiglia si chiama; hovero bisognia che in luogho suo sia hun altro, secondo la sententia d'Aristotile: «Hogni chasa è dal più antico governata»; l'uficio del quale, secondo Homero, è dare reghola agli altri et leggie. Di qui è huno proverbio che quasi bestemmiando dicie: «Abbi pari in chasa». Se noi consideriamo un borgho di case, el fine del quale è hun comodo soccorso di cose et di persone, conviene che uno vi sia regolatore degli altri, o preposto ivi da altri, o, con loro consentimento, come più preeminente eletto. Altrimenti non solo a quella mutua sufficientia non si perviene, ma alcuna volta, contendendo molti di soprastare, la vicinanza tutta si perverte. Similemente inn–una ciptà, della quale è fine bene et sufficientemente vivere, bisogna che ·ssia uno reggimento, e questo bisognia non solo nel governo diritto, ma etiandio nel perverso; et se questo non si fa, non solamente non si conseguita el fine della vita, ma etiandio la ciptà non è più quello ch'ell'era. Etiandio el regno partichulare, el fine del quale è tutto huno con quello della ciptà con magore fidanza di sua tranquilità, conviene che ·ssia huno re che regha et governi; altrimenti e subditi nonn–aquisterebbono el debito fine et il regnio perirebbe, secondo che ·lla inneffabile Verità dicie: «Hogni regnio in sé medesimo diviso sarà disolato». In questo medesimo modo in tutte le cose che a uno si dirizano si debbe gudicare. E perch'egli è manifesto che tutta la generatione humana è ordinata a uno, come sopra è mostro, bisognia che ·ssia uno che reguli et regha, et costui si debba chiamare 'monarcha' et 'inperadore'.

Così è chiaro che al bene essere del mondo è necessario che la monarchia e lo ‘nperio sia.

Capitolo VIII .

Come quella conditione che è la parte al tutto, quella àl'ordine partichulare a l'ordine universale.

Quella conditione che ha la parte al tutto, quella ha l'ordine particulare all'ordine huniversale. La parte si diriza al tutto come a ·ffine et hottimo: adunque l'ordine ch'è nella parte all'ordine ch'è nel tutto come a fine et hottimo si riduce. Di qui è chiaro che ·lla bontà dell'ordine particulare none eccede la bontà dello hordine huniversale, ma più tosto pel contrario. Due hordini si truovano nelle cose: l'ordine delle parti intra ·ssé medesime, et l'ordine delle parti ad uno che nonn–è parte, come l'ordine delle parti dello exercito intra ·ssé medesime, et l'ordine loro al capitano. Certamente l'ordine delle parti a uno è meglio come fine dello altro hordine, perché l'altro è a fine di quello, et non quello a ·ffine di questo. Honde se la forma di questo hordine si ritruova nelle parti della humana moltitudine, molto magiormente si debba inn–essa moltitudine ritrovare, per la forza della ragone predetta. Adunque tutte le parti che ·ssono sotto e regni, et essi regni, si debbono a uno prencipato riducere, et questo è monarcha et monarchia.

Capitolo IX .

Come la università humana è un tutto inverso alcune partied è alchuna parte inverso ad alcuno tutto.

Item, l’università humana è hun tutto inverso alcune parti ed è alcuna parte inverso ad alcuno tutto: perch’ella è un tutto rispetto de’ regni particulari et varie nationi; et è alcuna parte a rispetto di tutto l’universo. Adunque, come le cose inferiori alla università humana gli rispondono bene, così essa risponde bene al suo tutto. Le parti sue gli rispondono bene per un solo prencipio, adunque ella a l’universo et al prencipe suo, ch’è Iddio, bene risponde per un solo prencipio, e questo è el monarcha.

Capitolo X .

Come ogni cosa sta bene che è secondo la ‘ntenzione delprimo actore, che è Iddio.

Holtre a questo, ogni cosa sta bene la quale è secondo la ‘ntentione del primo actore, che è Iddio; e questo è manifesto apresso di caschuno che ·cconcede la divina bontà essere sommamente perfetta. La intentione del primo actore è che ogni cosa rapresenti tanto la divina similitudine quanto la propia natura può ricevere. Et per questo è detto: «Facciamo lo huomo ad imagine et similitudine nostra». E benché non si possa dire le cose sotto allo huomo essere fatte ‘a immagine’ di Dio, nientedimeno si può dire tutte le creature essere fatte ‘a divina similitudine’, perché lo huniverso non è altro che una honbra d’Iddio. Adunque la humana generatione allora sta bene quando, secondo che è possibile, a Dio s’assomiglia. Ma questa massime a ·llui s’assomiglia quando è massime huna, perché la vera natura della hunità in lui solo consiste; per questo è scripto: «Odi, Isdrael, il Signiore Iddio tuo è uno». Et allora la generatione humana è massime huna quando tutta inn–uno s’unisce, e questo non può essere se non quando è subgetta a uno principe. Per la quale cosa allora s’assomiglia massime a Dio, e ·ccosì è secondo la ‘ntentione sua, e hottime si conduce.

Capitolo XI .

Come ottime sta ogni figliuolo quando, secondo la forzadella propria natura, seghuita le vestigie del padre perfetto.

Ancora, hottime sta hogni figliuolo quando, secondo la forza della propia natura, seguita le vestige del padre perfetto. La generatione humana è figliuola del cielo, il quale in tutte l'opere sue è perfettissimo: perché lo huomo è generato da lo huomo et dal sole, come dice nel secondo della *Fisicha* Aristotile. Sicché allora hottime vive la generatione humana quando, secondo che permette la propia natura, seguita le vestige del cielo. Et come el cielo tutto è regholato da uno movimento hunicho del primo cielo et dello hunico motore, così la generatione humana allora hottime si conduce, quando da uno motore con hordine di legge è regholata. Per questo al bene essere del mondo è necessario la monarchia. Et così intese Boetio quando disse: «Ho quanto saresti felice, generatione humana, se quello amore che reggie el cielo e tua animi reggessi».

Capitolo XII .

Che dovunque può essere litigio, ivi debbe essere gudicio.

Dovunque può essere litigio, ivi debbe essere gudicio, altrimenti sarebbe la cosa inperfetta sanza la perfetta honde possa avere perfetione: è questo è inpossibile, conciosiaché Iddio et la natura nelle cose necessarie non manchino. Ma tra due principi, de' quali nessuno è all'altro subgetto, può essere contentione, ho per colpa sua o per colpa de' subditi: e per questo tra costoro debbe essere gudicio. Et perché l'altro non può gudicare dell'altro, essendo pari, bisognia che ·ssia un terzo di più anpla guriditione che ·ssopra amendun questi signoreggi. Quello ho e' sarà un prencipe, ho e' saranno più. Se sarà uno, noi abbiàno el proposito nostro; se saranno più, possono insieme contendere, e però hanno bisognio d'un terzo sopra ·lloro gudicatore. E ·ccosì ho noi proccedereno in infinito, la quale cosa essere non può, ho noi perveremo a uno principe el quale, o sanza mezo o co mezi, tutte le lite decida. Questa ragone significava Aristotile quand'e' diceva: «Le cose non vogliono essere male disposte; la moltitudine de' prencipi è male; adunque debbe essere uno principe».

Capitolo XIII .

Come el mondo è optime disposto quando in lui la gustitia è potentissima.

Holtre a questo, el mondo hottime è disposto quando in lui la gustitia è potentissima. E però Vergilio, volendo lodare e secoli suoi, nella *Boccolicha* disse: «Hora torna la vergine, hora tornano e regni di Saturno». Chiamava ‘la vergine’ la gustitia, la quale si chiama ancora ‘Astrea’, coè stellante; ‘e regni di Saturno’ chiamava e regni hottimi, e quali si chiamavano ancora ‘e regni d’oro’. E la gustitia è potentissima solo sotto huno monarcha: adunque alla hottima dispositione del mondo necessaria è la monarchia. è da notare che ·lla gustitia, in sé et in propia natura considerata, è una certa rettitudine et regola che da ogni parte schaccia el torto: e ·ccosì non riceve in sé più et meno, siccome la biancheza nella sua astratione considerata. Perché queste forme avengono al conposto, e di sé sono una essentia senplice et invariabile, come dice el Maestro de’ Sei Prencipii. Nientedimeno ricevono più et meno dalla parte de’ sugepti, secondo che più et meno de’ contrari in que’ subgepti è mescolato. Adunque, dove minima cosa di contrarietà si mescola con la gustitia, quanto allo abito et quanto all’operatione, la gustitia è potentissima, e puòssi dire di lei, come disse Aristotile: «Né Espro né Lucifero è sì amirabile». Inperò ch’ella è allora simile alla luna che risguarda el fratello suo per diamitro dalla purpurea et mattutina serenità. In quanto allo abito, la gustitia alcuna volta ha contrarietà nel volere; inperò, ove la volontà da ogni cupidità nonn–è sincera, benché la gustitia vi sia, nientedimeno la gustitia non è nello splendore della purità sua: inperò ch’ell’ha ‘l sugepto, el quale a ·llei si contrapone; e però meritamente sono schaccati quelli che riducono el gudice a perturbatione d’animo. Ma quanto alla operatione, la gustitia ha contrarietà nel potere; inperò che, essendo la gustitia virtù a rispetto d’altri, chi ·ssarà che adoperi secondo questa se non ha potenza di tribuire a cascuno quello che ·ssi gli conviene? Di qui procede che quanto el gusto è più potente, tanto la gustitia nella hoperatione sua è più anpla.

Di qui in questo modo s’arguisce: la gustitia è potentissima nel mondo quando ella è inn–uno subgetto volentissimo et potentissimo; solo tale è il monarcha; adunque solo quand’ella è nel monarcha la gustitia nel mondo è potentissima. Questo argumento corre per la seconda fighura colla neghatione intrinsica, ed è simile a questo: B è A; solo el C è A; adunque solo el C è B. E questo è quasi così: ogni B è A; nessuno altro che ‘l C è A; adunque nessuno altro che ‘l C è B. La prima apparisce per la dichiaratione sua; l’altra così si dimostra, e primo quanto al volere, di poi quanto al potere. E ·ssappia che alla gustitia massime si

contrapone la chupidità, come dice Aristotile nel secondo *A Nicomaco*. Rimossa in tutto la cupidità, non resta alla gustitia alcuno contrario, onde è sententia d'Aristotile che quello che ·ssi può diterminare per legge, non si lasci allo albitro del gudice. Questo si fa per sospetto della cupidità, che ·ffacilmente rivolge la mente degli huomini. Ma dove non resta alcuna cosa che ·ssi possa desiderare, ivi non può essere cupidità: perché, distrutti gli ogetti, si distrugono e movimenti che ·ssono ad essi. El monarcha non ha che desiderare, inperò che ·lla sua gurisditione dallo occeano è terminata. Questo non è negli altri principi, le signiorie de' quali confinano ad altre signiorie, come el regno di Chastiglia al regno d'Aragona. Per questo el monarchà intra ·ttutti e mortali può essere sincerissimo subgetto della gustitia. Ancora, come la cupidità, per pocha ch'ella sia, onubila et abaglia l'abito della gustitia, così la charità et retta dilettione l'assottiglia et chiarificha.

Adunque in colui può ottimo luogho avere la gustitia, nel quale può essere molto la retta diletione; el monarcha è tale: adunque, essendo lui, la gustitia è ho può essere validissima. Et che la retta dilectione faccia questo che è detto, così si dichiara: la cupidità, dispregando la sotietà humana, cercha le cose altrui; et la carità, spregate tutte l'altre cose, cercha Iddio et gli huomini, et per conseguenza el bene dello huomo. Et conciosiaché tra gli altri beni dello huomo sia vivere in pacie, come di sopra si diceva, e questo massime dalla gustitia proccede, la charità massime fortificherà la gustitia, e la magiore charità maggioremente. E ·cche 'l monarcha massime debba avere la repta dilettione degli huomini, così si dimostra: hogni cosa amabile tanto più è amata quanto è più propinqua allo amante; ma gli huomini sono più propinqui al monarcha che agli altri principi: adunque da ·llui massime sono ho debbono essere amati. La prima è manifesta, se si considera la natura de' patienti et degli agenti. La secondaper questo apparisce, perché gli huomini s'apropinquano agli altri prencipi mediante el monarcha, et non per contrario. E ·cchosì principalmente et sanza mezo el monarcha ha chura di tutti, et gli altri prencipi hanno chura pel monarcha, inperò che ·lla cura loro da quella suprema chura discende. Item, quanto la chagione è più huniversale, tanto più ha forza di chagione, perché la inferiore chagione non è chagione se none per virtù della superiore, come è manifesto nel libro *Delle Chause*; e quanto la chagione è più chagione, tanto più ama lo effetto, conciosiaché ·ttale dilectione dalla natura della chagione dipende. Adunque, perché 'l monarcha è intra mortali huniversalissima chagione che gli huomini vivano bene, faccendo gli altri principi questo per vigore di lui, seguita che 'l bene degli huomini è massime da ·llui amato. E ·cche 'l monarcha massime sia disposto all'operatione della gustitia nessuno dubita, intendendo che ·ss'egli è monarcha non può avere nimici.

Capitolo XIV .

Come la humana generatione, quand'è massime libera, ottimamente vive.

Item, l'umana generatione, quando è massime libera, hottimamente vive; e questo sarà manifesto se 'l prencipio della libertà si dichiara. Però è da ·ssapere che 'l prencipio primo della libertà nostra è la libertà dello arbitro, la quale in boccha hanno molti e pochi nello intelletto. Perché insino qui e' pervenghono, che dicono e libero arbitrio essere libero gudicio di volontà; ma quello che s'inporti per queste parole di lungi è da ·lloro, siccome tutto dì i nostri loici fanno di molte propositioni, le quali per dare essenpro si mescolano tra ·lle cose di loicha, come in questa: «el triangolo ha treangholi eghuali a due retti». Però dico che 'l gudicio è mezo tra ·lla aprensione et l'appetito: inperò che prima la cosa s'aprende, et poich'ell'è conpresa si gudica buona ho mala, hultimamente colui ch'ha giudicato la seghuita ho e' la fugge. Adunque, se 'l gudicio muove in tutto l'appitito e nonn–è inn–alcuno modo da ·llui prevenuto, certamente è libero; ma se 'l gudicio è mosso dallo appetito in qualunque modo preveniente, non può essere libero, ma è menato da altri preso. Di qui adiviene che' bruti non possono avere libero arbitrio, perché lo appitito senpre previene a loro gudicio. Di qui ancora può essere manifesto che ·lle sustanze intellectuali, che hanno le voluntà loro inmutabili, et ancora l'anime separate che bene di questa vita si dipartono, non perdono la libertà dello arbitrio, benché la volontà loro sia inmutabile, ma perfettissimamente questa ritengono.

Per questo ancora è chiaro che questa nostra libertà, hovero el prencipio d'essa, è el magiore bene che Iddio alla humana natura abbia atributo — come gà io dissi nel Paradiso della mia *Commedia* — inperò che per questo dono noi siamo qui felici chome huomini, et altrove come iddii. S'egli è così, qual è quello che non dicha l'umana generatione essere hottime disposta, quando può hottime questo prencipio husare? Ma quando ella è sotto el monarcha è massime libera, perché è per chagone di sé et non d'altri, nella qual cosa consiste la libertà, come nella *Metafisicha* dicie Aristotile. Inperò che quello che è per chagione d'altri è necessitato da quello per chui chagione egli è, come la via è necessitata dal termine. La generatione humana, solo signioregante el monarcha, è per cagione di sé et non d'altri, perché solamente allora le torte republiche si dirizano — come sono le popolari, et quelle in che pochi reghono, et le tiranide — le quali ·ssobgogano la generatione humana in servitù: allora reghono e re et anchora gli huomini eletti e' popoli amatori di libertà. E però, perché 'l monarcha massime ama gli huomini, disidera che tutti diventino buoni: la quale cosa non può essere

apresso di quegli che governano male. Honde Aristotile nella *Politicha* dice che nel chattivo ghoverno el buono ciptadino è malo huomo, et nello buono ghoverno huno medesimo è buono huomo et ciptadino buono. Certamente le rette repubriche hanno rispetto alla libertà: questo è, che gli huomini sieno per sé. Non sono e ciptadini pe' consoli, né la gente pel re; ma, pel contrario, e consoli sono pe' ciptadini, et el re per la gente. Però che ·ccome non è la civilità a ·ffine del re, ma el re a ·ffine di civilità, così quegli che vivono secondo le leggi non sono hordinati a ·ccolui che pone le leggi, ma ·ccholui a questi, come ancora piace a Aristotile nella *Politicha*.

Di qui ancora è chiaro che, bene che 'l consolo et el re, pe rispetto della via, siano signiori degli altri, nientedimeno, pe rispetto del termino, sono degli altri ministri; massime el monarcha, el quale sanza dubbio debbe essere stimato di tutti ministro. Di qui si dichiara che 'l monarcha è necessitato dal fine, el quale nel porre le leggi si propone. Adunque la generatione humana sotto el monarcha hottimamente vive, e però al bene essere del mondo la monarchia è necessaria.

Capitolo XV .

Come cholui che ppuò essere ottimamentedisposto a regere può optime disporre gli altri.

Oltre a questo, colui che può essere hottimamente disposto a reggiere può hottime disporre gli altri: inperò che innogni hoperatione principalmente intende lo attore, ho faccia egli per necessità di natura, o faccia per voluntà, de esprichare la propia similitudine. Di qui nasce che ogni attore si diletta dello operare, perché ogni cosa apetisce el suo essere, e nel fare l'essere dello attore s'anplifica: di qui seguita per necessità dilectatione, la quale è senpre conleghata con la cosa desiderata. Nessuna chosa adunque hopera se nonn–è tale quale debbe essere quello che ha a essere fatto; però disse Aristotile nella *Metafisicha*: «Ogni cosa che ·ssi riduce di potenza inn–acto, si riduce per la virtù d'un'altra che è inn–acto». Qui si distrugge l'errore di coloro che credono, parlando bene et male operando, gli altri amaestrare; e quali non conoscono che ·lle mani di Gacob persuaderono più che ·lle parole, benché quelle persuadessono el falso et quelle el vero. Honde Aristotile *A Nicomaco* dice: «Nelle disputationi che tractano delle hoperationi et passioni humane, si dà più fede alle opere che alle parole». Per questo si diceva dal cielo a Davit pecchatore: «Perché narri tu le mie vie?», quasi dica: «Tu parli invano, conciosiaché ·ttu ·sse' hun altro da quello che ·ttu parli». Per queste cose si ricoglie che ottimamente debbe essere disposto colui che vuole hottime gli altri disporre. El monarcha solo può essere hottime disposto a reggere.

La qual cosa in questo modo si dichiara: cascuna cosa tanto più facile et perfettamente si dispone allo abito et l'operatione quanto meno ha in sé contrarietà a tale dispositione; onde più facile et perfettamente vengono allo abito della verità filosophica quelli che nulla mai hudirono, che quelli che hanno hudito el falso. Sicché bene disse Ghalieno «tali avere bisognio di dopio tenpo a 'nparare». E non avendo el monarcha nulla ho minima chagone di cupidità, la qual cosa non aviene agli altri principi, edd–essendo la chupidità la propria corrutione del gudice et della gustitia, è ragonevole che lui solo può essere ottime disposto a reggere, perché può più che gli altri avere gudicio et gustitia: le quali due cose principalmente a ·ccolui che ·ppone la legge et a ·ccolui che ·lla mette inn–assegutione sono necessarie. Di questo fece testimonianza quello santissimo re quando chiedeva a Dio quello che a re et a ·ffigliuolo di re s'appartiene, dicendo: «Ho Iddio, dà il gudicio tuo al re e ·lla gustitia tua dà al figliuolo del re». Solo adunque el monarcha, essendo ottime disposto a reggere,

può ottimamente gli altri disporre. Però la monarchia all’ottima dispositione del mondo fu necessaria.

Capitolo XVI .

Come quello che ·ssi può fare per uno, meglio è a ·ffarloper uno che per molti.

Item, quello che ·ssi può fare per uno, meglio è a ·ffarlo per uno che per molti. Questo così si dichiara: sia uno pel quale alcuna chosa si può fare et abbia nome A; e ·ssieno più cose per le quali similmente si possa questo fare e chiaminsi A et B. Adunque se quel medesimo che ·ssi fa per la A et B si può fare per la A sola, invano vi si assumme el B, perché per la assuntione sua nulla seguita, potendosi fare questo per la A solo. Però tale agunsione è vana et superfua, et hogni superfuo è inimicho a Dio et alla natura, et quello che dispiace a ·ccostoro è male: onde seguita che non solo è meglio fare per uno quello che ·ssi può, che per due, ma etiandio che ·ffare per uno è bene et per più è male. Item, la cosa si dice migliore per l'essere più propinqua allo hottimo; el fine ha natura d'ottimo, e ·ffare per uno è più propinquo al fine: adunque è meglio. E ·cche sia più propinquo, così è manifesto: sia el fine C, et el fare per uno sia A, e per due A et B. è manifesto che più lungha via è da la A per B in C, che dalla A solo in C. Ma la generatione humana si può reggere per uno prencipe. Per la qual cosa è da considerare che quando si dice che 'per uno supremo prencipe si può governare', non s'intende che qualunque minimo gudicio in qualunque villa possi da quello uno sanza mezo disporsi, conciosiaché ·lle leggi municipali alle volte manchino, et abbino bisognio di corretione, come dice el Filosafo nel quinto *A Nicomaco*, dove comenda Enpedocle. Inperò che ·lle nationi, regni et ciptà hanno tra loro certe propietà, per le quali bisognia con diferenti leggi governare: perché la legge è regola che diriza la via. Altrimenti conviene regholare gli Isciti, che vivono fuori del settimo clima et hanno molta inequalità di dì et di nocti e ·ssono da intollerabile fredo hopressati; et altrimenti e Garamanti, che abitano sotto lo equinotio e senpre hano la luce equale alla notte, e non possono per gran caldi patire vestimenti. Ma debbasi così intendere: che la humana generatione, secondo le comuni reghole che ·ssi convenghono a tutti, sia regholata dalla monarchia, et per la reghola comune sia a pace condotta. La quale reghola et legge debbono e principi partichulari dal monarcha ricevere, come lo intelletto praticho a fare concrusione d'operare riceve la propositione maggiore dallo intelletto speculativo, e ·ssotto quella agugnie la partichulare che è propia da ·llui, et particularmente alla hoperatione conchiude. E questo non solamente è possibile a uno, ma è necessario che da un solo proceda, acciò che ogni confusione dalli huniversali princìpi sia tolta. E questo essere fatto da Cristo scrive Moysè nella legge, el quale, assunti e principali de' tribù de' figliuoli

d’Isdrael, lascava loro e gudìci inferiori, riserbando a ·ssé e supperiori et più comuni, e quali comuni usavano e principali pe’ loro tribù, secondo che a caschuna tribù si convenia. Adunque è meglio la humana generatione si governi per uno che per molti; e ·sse quello che è meglio è più accepto a Dio, conciosiacosaché ·dDio senpre voglia quello che è meglio, è ragonevole che sia a ·dDio acceptabilissimo el governo d’uno. Però la humana generatione hottime viverà quando sarà da uno governata; e così è necessaria la monarchia al bene essere del mondo.

Capitolo XVII .

Chome l’essere, l’uno et el bene ànno tra ·lloro ordine.

Oltre a questo, l’essere, l’uno et el bene hanno tra ·lloro hordine, secondo el primo modo del chiamarsi ‘prima’. L’essere per natura precede l’uno, l’uno precede el bene: quello che è massime è massime uno, e <‘l massime uno è> massime buono. Et quanto più alcuna cosa si dilungha da quello che è massime, tanto dall’essere uno si dilungha, et tanto dall’esere buona. Per questo inn–ogni generatione di cosa, quella è hottima che è massime huna, come dice Aristotile nella *Metafisicha*. Di qui adiviene che l’essere uno è radicie dello essere buono, et l’essere molti è radicie dell’essere male; però Pittagora nelle sue ordinationi dalla parte del bene poneva uno, dalla parte del male poneva moltitudine, come si manifesta nella *Metafisicha*. Di qui puoi vedere che pecchare nonn–è altro che procedere da uno a moltitudine; la qual cosa significha el Salmista dicendo: «Del frutto del frumento, vino et holio sono multipricati chostoro». è adunque manifesto che ·cciò che è buono è tale perché consiste in uno. E conciosiaché ·lla concordia, in quanto è concordia, sia alcuno bene, è manifesto ch’ella consiste in qualche uno come in propia radice; la quale radice apparirà se ·lla natura et propietà della concordia si conosce. La concordia è uniforme movimento di più volontà; nella quale ragone apparisce che l’unità delle volontà, laquale per moto huniforme nasce, è la radice della concordia, hovero essa concordia. Inperò che ·ccome noi diremo più parti di terra essere ‘concordi’ pel discendere tutte al mezo, et più fiamme essere ‘concorde’ per salire tutte in alto, s’elle facessono questo volontariamente; così diciamo più huomini essere ‘concordi’ pel muoversi tutti insieme secondo el volere ad uno, el quale è formalmente nelle volontà loro, come una qualità formalmente in molte parti della terra, e questa è gravità, et una nelle fiamme, che è levità. Inperò che la virtù del volere è una potenzia, et la spetie del bene conpreso è huna sua forma; la qual forma, così come l’altre, essendo una in sé, si multipricha per la moltitudine della materia riscipiente, come l’anima e ‘l numero et l’altre forme che nella conpositione si ricevono. Dette queste cose a dichiaratione, al proposito nostro così argomentiamo: hogni concordia dipende da unità, la quale è nelle voluntà; la generatione humana, quando hottime vive, è una certa concordia, perché come huno huomo, quando hottime è disposto, e quanto alla anima et quanto al corpo, è una certa concordia, et similmente la casa, la ciptà et el regno, così tutta la generatione humana; adunque la humana generatione, hottime disposta, dalla hunità ch’è nelle volontà dipende, e questa hunità dipende da huno. Ma questo

non può essere, se non è huna voluntà che ·ssia signiore et una reghola di tutte l’altre in uno, conciosiaché ·lle voluntà de’ mortali, per chagone de’ lusinghevoli diletti della adoloscenza, abino bisognio di chi a bene gli dirizi, come Aristotile insegnia nel libro hutimo *A Nicomaco*. E questa huna voluntà non può essere, se non è hun principe di tutti, la volontà del quale domini et regoli tutte le volontà degli altri. Adunque, se tutte le supperiori concrusioni sono vere, che certamente così sono, è necessario che alla ottima dispositione della generatione humana sia nel mondo el monarcha, e per conseguente al bene essere del mondo sia la monarchia.

Capitolo XVIII .

Come Cristo nel suo avenimento elesse el tenpodella tranquilla pace overamente la dispuose.

A tutte le ragioni di sopra scripte una memoriabile experienza fa testimonianza. Questo è quello stato de’ mortali, el quale el figliuolo di Dio, per la salute degli huomini assumendo lo huomo, aspettò, overamente, quando volle, lo dispuose. Inperò che, se noi ci rivolgiano per la mente le dispositioni et tenpi degli huomini dalla trasgressione de’ primi genitori, la quale dette prencipio a tutti e nostri errori, non troveremo mai el mondo essere stato quieto se non sopto Cesare Aughusto, che ·ffu monarcha di monarchia perfetta. Et che allora la humana generatione fusse felice nella tranquilità della universale pace ne danno testimonianza tutti gli storiografi et gli inlustri poeti; questo ancora testimonia lo scriba della mansuetudine di Cristo; et ancora Paulo chiamò quello stato felicissimo «prenitudine del tenpo». Veramente el tenpo et le cose tenporali allora furono adenpiute, perché nessuno misterio della felicità nostra manchò al mondo. Ma in che modo sia el mondo disposto da quel tenpo in qua che ·lla vesta inconsutile fu stracciata dalle hunghia della cupidità, noi lo possiamo leggere: Dio volessi che noi no ·llo potessimo vedere. O generatione humana! quante tenpeste, danni et ruine se’ costrepta a patire, mentre che ·ttu se’ fatta bestia di molti capi, e per questo ti sforzi collo infermo intelletto per in diverse cose ravolgerti, avendo erore nello intelletto speculativo et nel pratico, et errando nello affetto: et non curi lo intelletto supperiore che ha in sé ragoni insuperabili, et non raguardi el volto inferiore della sperienza, né ancora l’affetto dolce della divina persuasione, quando per la tronba del santo spirito t’è sonato: «Ecco quanto buono et quanto gocondo è che e fratelli abitino inn–uno».

LIBRO II

Capitolo I.

Proemio del secondo libro della Monarchia di Dante, etpreparatione a mostrare se ‘l popolo romano di ragione s’àpresa la degnità dello inperio, che ·ssi dicie ‘monarchia’.

«Perché hanno fatto rimore le genti, et e popoli hanno pensato cose vane? Sonsi fatto innanzi e re della terra, e e prencipi sono concorsi inn–uno, contro al Signiore et contro a Cristo suo. Adunque ronpiamo e loro leghami, e rimoviamo da ·nnoi el gogho loro».

Chome quando noi non pervegniamo alla faccia della chagione comunemente ci maravigliamo del nuovo effetto, così quando noi conosciano la chagione, con una certa deresione dispreziamo quegli che restano in amiratione. Io gà mi maravigliavo del romano popolo, che sanza alcuna resistenza nel circhulo della terra fussi perfetto, quando solamente secondo la superficie risguardavo; ché quello, non co ragione, ma con forza d’arme, mi pareva che avessi hottenuto el principato. Ma poiché io ho e fondamenti meglio veduti, et per eficaci segni ho conosciuto questo essere fatto dalla divina providenza, non mi maraviglio più, ma con derisione disprezo, avendo io conosciuto le genti contro alla preminenza del popolo romano fare romore, et vedendo e popoli pensare le cose vane, com’io solevo, e massime dolendomi che e re et e principi in questo s’accordino: a ·ccontraporsi al signiore suo, et allo unico principe romano. Per la qual cosa con deresione et con dolore posso chiamare insieme con colui pel glorioso popolo et per Cesare, che ·cchiamava pel Principe del cielo: «Perché hanno fatto rimore le genti, et e popoli hano pensato cose vane? Sonsi fatto innanzi e re della terra, et e principi sono concorsi in uno, contro al Signore et contro a Cristo suo». Ma perché el naturale amore non patissce che ·lla deresione sia lungha, come el sole di state non patisce e nuvoli, lascata adietro la deresione, vuole spargere luce di corretione, per ronpere e leghami della ingnoranza di tali re et principi, per mostrare la generatione humana essere libera dal loro gogho. E però io col profeta santissimo mi conforterò, così dicendo: «Ronpiamo e loro leghami, et rimoviamo da ·nnoi el gogho loro». Queste due cose sufficientemente faremo, se io seguiterò la seconda parte del nostro proposito, et mosterrò la verità della presente quistione. Inperò che, mostrando el romano inperio essere stato ragonevole, non solamente si leverà la nebbia degli occhi de’ principi e quali usurpano a ·ssé el ghoverno et mendacemente stimano questo del popolo romano, ma etiandio tutti gli huomini riconosceranno sé essere liberi dal gogho di questi husurpatori. La verità di questa quistione può essere manifesta

non solo per lume di ragione humana, ma etiandío per razo della autorità divina: le qali due cose quando insieme concorono, è necessario che cielo et terra v'aconsentischa. Adunque con questa fidanza, et pel testimone della ragone et della autorità, la seconda quistione dichiareremo.

Capitolo II.

Che verità è quella, nella quale le ragioni della presenteinquisitione, come in principio suo, si riduchono.

Da poi che ·ssuficentemente, secondo che patisce la materia, abbiamo cerchato della verità della quistione prima, resta hora cercare della verità della seconda: e questo è se ‘l popolo romano di ragione s’ha presa la degnità dello inperio. Di questa inquisizione el prencipio è vedere che verità è quella, nella quale le ragioni della presente inquisitione, come in prencipio suo, si riducono. è da notare che ·ccome l’arte in tre gradi si truova, nella mente dello artefice, nello strumento, et nella materia formata dall’arte, così la natura in tre gradi si considera. Perché la natura è nella mente del primo movitore, che è Iddio; di poi nel cielo, come inn–istrumento mediante el quale la similitudine della etterna bontà nella materia inferiore si spande. E come, quando è perfetto l’artefice et lo strumento è bene disposto, se errore adiviene nella forma dell’arte, solo si debba riputarlo dalla materia; così, perché Iddio contiene la somma perfetione, e ‘l cielo, suo istrumento, non patisce difetto della perfetione sua, resta che ogni errore che è nelle cose inferiori è per colpa d’essa inferiore materia, ed è fuori della intentione di Dio et del cielo; e che ciò che è di bene nelle cose inferiori, non potendo essere dalla materia, che è sola potentia, principalmente è dallo artefice Iddio, et secondario dal cielo, che è istrumento dell’arte divina, la quale comunemente chiamiamo ‘natura’. Di qui è manifesto che essa ragione, essendo bene, principalmente è nella mente di Dio; et perché cò che è nella mente di Dio è esso Iddio, secondo quel detto«Cò che è fatto era in lui vita», et Iddio massime vuole sé medesimo, seghuita che ·lla ragione da Dio, secondo che è inn–esso, sia voluta. Et perché la volontà et la cosa voluta in Iddio è tutto uno, seghuita che ·lla divina voluntà siaessa ragione. Di qui nasce che ·lla ragione nelle cose nonn–è altro che ·ssimilitudine della voluntà divina; e però quel che non consuona alla volontà di Dio, non può essere essa ragione, e ciò che è consonante alla divina voluntà è ragione. Per la qual cosa, cerchare se alcuna cosa è fatta di ragione non è altro che cerchare s’ella è fatta secondo che vuole Iddio. Questo adunque prosopogniamo: che quello che vuole Iddio nella sotietà humana, quello per vero et sincero si debba stimare. Ancora tegniamo a mente, come dice Aristotile nel primo della *Eticha*: non si debba richiedere la certeza equalmente in ogni materia, ma secondo che ·lla natura del subgetto riceve. Sicché sufficientemente gli argumenti pel principio provato proccedono, se da manifesti segni et d’autorità di savi la ragione di quel popolo glorioso si cercha. La volontà di Dio

per sé nonn–è visibile; e le cose di Dio invisibili s’intendono et veghono «per quelle cose che ·ssono da ·llui fatte», così come la cera fa manifesta la figura che nel subgello è occulta. Non ti maravigliare se ·lla divina voluntà si cercha pe ·segni, conciosiaché ·lla humana voluntà non si conosce se none pe se·gni exteriori.

Capitolo III.

Che ‘l romano populo non usurpò, ma di ragione preselo ‘nperio sopra tutti e mortali.

Dico adunque a questa quistione che ‘l romano populo nonn–usurpò, ma di ragione prese lo ‘nperio sopra tutti e mortali. Questo così si pruova: e’ si conviene al populo nobilissimo d’essere preposto sopra gli altri; el popolo romano fu nobilissimo; adunque a ·llui si convenne essere preposto agli altri. Concosiaché lo honore è premio della virtù, et hogni prelatione è honore, seguita adunque che ogni prelatione è premio di virtù. Ed è manifesto che pel mezo della virtù gli huomini si fanno nobili (dico della virtù propia ho della virtù de’ sua antinati). Perché la nobiltà è virtù con antiche riccheze, come dice Aristotile nella *Politicha*. Et Govinale dice: «La nobiltà dello animo è la virtù sola». Le quali due sententie si riferiscono a due nobilità, alla propia et a quella degli antinati. Adunque a’ nobili, per ragione della chagione, è conveniente il premio della prelatione. Et avendosi a misurare premi co meriti, secondo el detto dello Evangelio «Con quella misura ch’avete misurati altri sarete misurati voi», di qui seghuita che al massime nobile si conviene massime essere preposto. Questo confermano et testimoniano gli antichi; perché il divino poeta Virgilio in tutta l’*Eneyde* manifesta che ‘l gloriosissimo re Enea fu padre del popolo romano; et questo testimonia Tito Livio nel primo libro, che pigla prencipio dalla chattività di Troya. Et di quanta nobilità fusse quel padre invittissimo et piissimo, non solamente considerata la virtù sua, ma degli antinati et della donna (la nobiltà de’ quali per ragione ereditaria in lui si trasferisce), isprichare mai non lo potrei, sicché ne parlerò in somma. Adunque, quanto alla nobiltà sua propia, ascolta Virgilio nel primo, come introducie Ilioneo così horante: «El re nostro era Enea, del quale nessuno mai fu più gusto, né più pio, né in battaglie d’arme magore». Ancora nel sesto, quando parla di Miseno morto, ch’era stato ministro d’Ettorre in battaglia, et dopo la morte di Ettorre s’era fatto ministro di Enea, dice che Miseno «non seguitò huomo inferiore al primo»; et in questo fa conperatione da Enea a Ettorre, el quale Homero sopra gli altri avea glorificato, come riferisce Aristotile *A Nicomaco*. Et quanto alla nobilità ereditaria, cascuna parte della terra tripartita, quanto agli avoli et alla donna, l’ha nobilitato. L’Asia nobilitò e propinqui suoi avoli, et Assaracho et gli altri che regniorono in Frigia, che è parte della Asia; onde Vergilio nel terzo dice: «Poiché piaque agli iddii rivoltare le cose di Asia, et la gente di Priamo non colpevole». L’Europia nobilitò l’antichissimo avolo Dardano, et l’Africha li nobilitò l’avola antichissima Eletra,

nata del re Atrante, come d’amenduni parla il poeta nello ottavo, ove Enea così parla ad Evandro: «Dardano, primo padre della ciptà Iliaca, il quale, come e Greci dicono, d’Electra et del figliuolo d’Atrante fu generato; di costui dipendono e Troyani, et Eletra dipende dal massimo Atrante, che ·ccolle spalle sostiene le spere del cielo». E ·cche Dardano avesse origine da Europa, Virgilio nel terzo così dimostrò: «Egli è uno luogho, che da’ Greci è detto Esperia, terra antiqua et potente inn–arme et fertilità; Enotri l’abitorono; e discendenti poi la chiamarono Ytalia, dal nome del duca loro. Queste sono a voi le propie sedie, di qui è nato Dardano». E ·cche Atrante fusse della Africha, lo manifesta uno monte d’Africha che è chiamato Atrante; el quale che sia inn–Africha testimonia Horosio così nella descritione del mondo: «L’ultimo fine suo è el monte Atrante et le ysole chiamate Fortunate». Ancora fu nobilitato per matrimonio. La prima sua moglie Creusa, figliuola del re Priamo, fu d’Asia, come di sopra si vede. E ·cch’ella fusse donna sua mostra Vergilio nel terzo, hove Andromacha così domanda Enea del suo figliuolo Ascanio: «Dimmi, Enea, vive el tuo figliuolo Ascanio, el quale ti partorì Creusa, quand’e’ fioriva Troya?». La seconda moglie fu Didone, regina et madre de’ Cartagínesi in Africha; et che fussi moglie dichiara Virgilio nel quarto: «Didone non pensa di furtivo amore, anche lo chiama matrimonio, e con questo nome coprì la colpa sua». La terza donna fu Lavinia d’Albina, madre de’ romani, figliuola del re Latino edd–erede, se dicie el vero Vergilio nel’ultimo, Iove induce Turno vinto così parlante ad Enea: «Tu hai vinto, et gli Ausoni hanno veduto me vinto a ·tte sottomettermi. Lavinia è tua moglie». La quale hultima moglie fu di Ytalia, nobilissima regione della Europia.Per questo è manifesto che ‘l padre del popolo romano dal lato masculino et feminino fu nobilissimo, et similemente el popolo da ·llui discendente.

Capitolo IV.

Che quello che alla perfetione sua è aiutato da miracoli è da Dio voluto.

Qello etiandio che alla perfetione sua è aiutato da miracoli, è da Dio voluto; e però è per ragione. E che questo sia vero, così si manifesta, come dice santo Tomaso nel terzo *Contro a' Gentili*: miracolo è quella cosa che per divino vighore aviene fuori dello ordine comune delle cose. Honde lui pruova che 'l fare miracoli solo a Dio s'appartiene; la quale cosa si conferma con l'autorità di Moysè, el quale dice che, quando si venne a l'operare de' segni, e magi di Faraone, che artificiosamente usavano e naturali principii, mancorono et dissono: «Questo è il dito di Dio». Se adunque il miracolo è inmediate operatione del Primo principio sanza la hoperatione de' secondi fattori, come santo Tomaso inn–esso libro sufficientemente pruova, quando si distende in favore d'alcuna cosa, non è lecito dire che quello a ·cchui dà Iddio tal favore non dependa da Dio, come cosa a ·llui piacuta et da ·llui proveduta. Per la qual cosa è licito concedere el suo contrario: el romano inperio alla perfetione sua essere stato da miracoli aiutato; adunque Iddio così ha voluto; e però fu ed è secondo ragione. Et che, per crescere lo 'nperio romano, Iddio abbi dimostro miracoli, si pruova per testimonio di degni autori. Inperò che sopto Numa Ponpilio, secondo re de' Romani, mentre che sagrificava secondo el costume de' Gentili, uno schudo cadde dal cielo nella ciptà elepta da Dio, come testimonia Livio nella prima parte. El quale miracolo Lucano raccontanel nono libro, quando tracta della forza incredibile del vento Austro che regnia in Libia, dove dice in questo modo: «di quelle arme che caddono a el sacrificator Numa, le quali la gioventù eletta col patritio collo portò; aveva el vento Austro, overo Borea, spogliati e popoli che portavano queste nostre arme». E conciosiache' Francosi, preso gà el resto della ciptà, confidandosi nelle tenebre della nocte, nascosamente entrassino nel Canpidoglio, la quale cosa sola restava alla ultima distrutione dello inperio romano, dice che l'oche, non mai pel passato quivi vedute, cantarono che' Francosi erano quivi presenti, e destorono le ghuardie a difendere el Canpidoglio; e questo testimonia Livio et altri degni scriptori. Questo ancora raccontò Virgilio nello ottavo, discrivendo lo scudo d'Enea, dove parla così: «Nella somma parte stava Mallio, difensore della roccha Tarpea, dinanzi al tenpio, e difendeva l'alto Capitolio, et la reale casa di nuovo fatta era aspra di paglia romulea. E qui la biancha hocha, volando negli portichi dorati, cantava che' Franceschi erano presenti». Ancora, quando la romana nobilità, assediata da Anibale, rovinava in tal modo che all'ultima distrutione della romana repubricha

non restava se none lo assalto degli Africani nella ciptà, acchadde che per la subita et intollerabile gragniuola gli Africani vincitori non poterono loro vittoria seghuire, e questo scrive Livio nella *Africana battaglia*. Hor non fue egli mirabile cosa el transito d'Oratio Cocle, quando la donna, presa nello assedio di Porsenna, ruppe e leghami et per aiuto di Dio passò notando el Tevero, come gli scriptori romani quasi tutti per gloria di quella ciptà narrano? E ·ccosì si conveniva operare a ·cColui, el quale ab etterno con bello hordine tutte le cose provide, acciò che ·ccolui ch'era invisibile, avendo a mostrare miracholi per le cose visibili, diventasse visibile, et per quelle le invisibili dimostrasse.

Capitolo V.

Che colui che diriza el pensiero suo al bene della repubrichadiriza el pensiero al fine della ragione.

Colui che diriza el pensiero suo al bene della repubricha diriza el pensiero al fine della ragione. E ·cche ·ccosì seghuiti in questo modo si dichiara: la ragione è una proporzione reale et personale tra huomo et huomo, la quale, quando s'osserva, conserva la humana congreghatione, et quando è corrotta la corronpe (inperò che quella descritione che ·ssi fa ne' *Digesti* non dice proprio quello che ·ssia ragione, ma discrive quella secondo el modo d'usarla); adunque, se quella difinitione bene conprende la sustanza et lo effetto, et el fine di ca-scuna congregatione è per cagione de' buoni conpagni, è necessario che 'l fine di qualunque ragone sia el bene comune, ed è inpossibile che ·ssia ragone quello che none atende al bene comune. E però Tulio nella *Prima rettoricha* dice che ·ssenpre si vuole interpetrare le leggi a utilità della repubricha. Et se le leggi non si dirizano a utilità di coloro che ·ssono sotto la legge, hanno solo el nome di leggi, ma in verità non possono essere leggi; inperò che conviene che le leggi uniscano gli huomini insieme a utilità comune. Per la qual cosa Senacha bene dice nel libro delle *Quatro virtù morali* che «lla leggie è huno vincolo della sotietà humana». è adunque manifesto che ·cchi attende al bene della repubrica attende al fine della ragione. Adunque se' Romani attesono al bene della repubrica, si potrà veramente dire che abbino atteso al fine della ragione. Et che quello popolo abbia atteso a detto bene sottomettendo a ·ssé el circulo della terra, e sua fatti lo dichiarano; ne' quali, rimossa hogni cupidità, che ·ssenpre alla repubrica è nemicha, amando la pace con libertà insieme, quel santo, pietoso et glorioso popolo si vede avere dispregato e propri comodi, acciò che proccurassi le cose publiche per la salute della humana generatione. Honde rettamente è scripto: «Lo 'nperio romano nasce dal Fonte della pietà ».

Ma perché della intentione di tutti quegli che operano per eletione nessuna cosa è manifesta a ·cchi di fuori riguarda, se non pe se·gni exteriori, e' sermoni si richieghono secondo la subgetta materia, secondo che di sopra è detto, assai in questo luogho aremo se delle intentioni del popolo romano segni indubitabili ne' colleggi et nelle private persone si mostrano. De' collegi, pe' quali li huomini pare che ·ssieno leghati insieme nella repubrica, basta solo l'autorità di Tulio nel secondo *De hufici*, hove dice che, «mentre che ·llo 'nperio della repubrica si teneva con benifici et non con ingurie, si faceva guerra o pe' colleghati ho per lo inperio, e però e fini delle ghuerre erano miti o necessarii; el Senato era porto et

refuggio de’ re, popoli et nationi; e’ magistrati nostri et inperadori si sforzavano in questo masime aquistare loda, se difendessino le province et e conpagni con equità et gloria et fede; per la qual cosa questo si poteva chiamare più tosto ‘soccorso del mondo’ che ‘‘nperio’». E questo disse Tulio de’ collegi.
Ma delle persone private brievemente tracterò. Or non si debbe e’ dire che ·ccoloro abino atteso al bene comune e quali con sudore, et povertà, et esilio, et privatione de’ figliuoli, et perdimento di menbri, et morte, el pubrico bene hanno cresciuto? Or non ci lascò exenpro Cincinnato di lascare liberamente le degnità nel termino, quando levato fu dallo aratro et fatto dittatore, come Livio riferisce, e dopo la vittoria et triunfo, restituta la ‘nperiale bacchetta a’ consoli, si tornò alle possessioni sue a sudare dietro a’ sua buoi? Et a laulde di costui Tulio contro allo Epicuro nel libro *Del Fine de’ beni* così dice: «E nostri antecessori levorono dallo aratro Cincinato perché fussi dittatore». Ancora, Fabritio ci dette grande exenpro di fare risistenza alla avaritia quando, benché fussi povero, per la fede con la quale era leghato con la repubrica, rifiutò gran copia d’oro che gli fu hofferta. Ancora la sententia di costui è confermata da Virgilio nel sesto, dicendo: «Fabritio di poco potente». Oltre a questo, Chamillo ci dette exenpro memoriabile di preporre la legge a’ propi comodi; el quale, secondo Livio, confinato, poich’aveva libera l’assediata patria, et le spoglie romane aveva rendute a Roma, et contro a la voglia di tutto el popolo della santa ciptà si partì, e non tornò prima che el senato gli desse licenza di rinpatriare. E questo come magnianimo è lodato da Virgilio nel sesto, dicendo: «Camillo riporta e segni». Ancora el primo Bruto dimostrò che e propi figliuoli s’avessono a posporre alla libertà della patria; del quale dice Livio che, essendo consolo, dette morte a’ propii figliuoli, perché s’erano co’ nimici accordati. La gloria del quale rinnuova Virgilio nel sesto: «El padre chiamava a morte per la bella libertà e figluoli suoi, perché e’ movevano nuove ghuerre». Mutio ci dimostrò che si vuole sottoporsi a ogni pericolo per la patria, quando l’errante mano, non con altro volto che ·sse tormentassi el nimicho, guatava dal fuoco consumata. Del quale si maraviglia Livio dicendo. Venghino hora quelle sagratissime vittorie de’ Deci, che per la publicha salute puosono le divote anime; ancora apparisce l’innefabile sagrificio del severissimo huomo autore di libertà, Marco Chatone. De’ quali l’uno per la salute della patria non temé la morte; l’altro, acciò che accendessi nel mondo lo amore della libertà, dichiarò di quanto prezo fussi la libertà, quand’e’ volle più tosto huscire di vita libero che ·ssanza libertà vivere. El nome egregio di tutti costoro per la vocie di Tulio si rinnuova nel libro *Del Fine de’ beni*, dove e’ dicie così de’ Deci: «Publio Decio, prencipe in quella famiglia, consolo, quando offerse sé medesimo e, lascato el chavallo, nel mezo della turba de’ Latini fieramente si misse, pensava egli alcuna cosa de’ suoi piaceri, in che modo egli

pigliassi ho quando, conciosiaché sapessi sé a mano a mano dovere morire, et corressi con più ardente studio a quella morte che non istima l'Epicuro doversi alla voluctà correre? Questo suo fatto, se non si fussi per ragone lodato, non l'arebbe seghuito nel quarto suo consolato el suo figliuolo; né ancora el figliuolo del figliuolo, essendo consolo, et conbattendo con Pirro, sarebbe in quella battaglia chaduto, et avrebbe offerto sé medesimo per terzo sagrificio nella generatione sua». Ancora ne ·libro *De hofici* dice: «Or non ebbe altra cagone Marcho Chatone, et altra quegli che ·ssi dettono inn–Africha a Cesare. E ·ssarebbono suti ripresi gli altri se si fussono morti, perché la loro vita era più leggieri e' loro costumi più facili; ma perché a ·cChatone la natura gli avea dato incredibile gravità, et con continova costantia lui l'aveva acresciuta, e ·ssenpre aveva perseverato nel proposito e consiglio suo, sì gli convenne più tosto morire che vedere el volto del tiranno».

Capitolo VI .

Che ·cchi pretende el fine della ragone, chon la ragione proccede.

Due cose sono dichiarate: prima, che ·cchi atende al bene della repubrica attende al fine della ragione; l'altra, che 'l romano popolo, sobgoghando a ·ssé la terra, pretende el fine della ragione. E però così argumentiamo: chi pretende el fine della ragione, con la ragone proccede; el romano popolo, sobgogando a ·ssé la terra, pretende al fine della ragione, come nel capitolo di sopra è provato: adunque el popolo romano, sobgugando a ·ssé la terra, lo fece con ragione, e però degnamente s'aquistò lo 'nperio. E per confermare meglio la detta ragone si vuole dichiarare quel detto che 'cchi attende al fine della ragione, con la ragone procede'. Per questo si debba considerare che cascuna cosa è a qualche fine; altrimenti sarebbe hotiosa, la quale cosa essere non può. E ·ccome cascuna cosa è al propio fine, così hogni propio fine ha qualche ·ccosa di che è fine; onde è inpossibile che due cose, in quanto elle sono diferenti, tendino a uno fine medesimo, perché seguiterebbe lo inconveniente medesimo che ·ll'uno di que' due fusse invano. Adunque, perch'egli è qualche fine della ragone, è necessario che, posto el fine, si pongha la ragione, conciosiaché esso fine sia propio effetto della ragione. E perch'egli è inpossibile inn–ogni conseguenza avere l'antecedente sanza el conseguente (come avere lo huomo sanza lo animale), come è manifesto nello affermare et nel neghare, è inpossibile cerchare el fine della ragione sanza essa ragione, perché cascuna cosa è disposta al suo fine come el conseguente a lo antecedente; inperò che non si può avere buona abitudine de' menbri sanza la sanità. Sicché è manifesto che bisognia che qualunque intende al fine della ragione, con la ragione proceda; e non vale quella hobgetione che ·ssi trae delle parole d'Aristotile quando dice che d'un falso argumento in qualche modo se ne conchiude el vero. Inperò che questo è per accidente, in quanto esso vero s'inporta per le voci della conseguenza; perché, secondo sé medesimo, el vero del falso non seguita, ben è vero che' segni del vero seguitano alcuna volta de' segni del falso, come aviene nelle operationi; inperò che, bene che ·ladro del furto sovengha el povero, questa suventione non si debba chiamare limosina, ma è huna hoperatione la quale, se fussi fatta di propria sustanza, arebbe forma di limosina. Così del fine della ragione; perché se alcuna cosa s'ottenessi come fine di ragione sanza essa ragione, in tal modo sarebbe fine di ragone come è la soventione fatta di furto limosina. E ·cconciosiaché nella propositione si dica del fine della ragione vero, none apparente, non si può a questo hopporre.

Capitolo VII .

Che quello che per natura è ordinato, per ragione s'osserva;et come el romano popolo da la natura fu ordinato a inperare.

Qello che per natura è hordinato, pe ·ragone s'osserva; perché la natura non mancha nel provedere, e nonn–è meno che la providenza dello huomo; perché s'ella fussi meno, l'effetto avanzerebbe la chagone in bontà; che non può essere. Ma noi veggiamo che ne' colegi non solo l'ordine de' collegi intra loro è considerato dallo ordinatore, ma etiandio la fachultà a esercitare gli hufici: e questo è considerare el termine della ragione nel collegio, hovero nello ordine; e non si vede che ·lla ragone si manifesti oltre al potere. Adunque la natura nel suo hordine non è da meno che questa providenza humana. Per questo è manifesto che ·lla natura hordina le cose avendo rispetto alla sua facultà; el quale rispetto è el fondamento della ragione nelle cose posto dalla natura. Di qui seguita che l'ordine naturale nelle cose non si può sanza la ragione hoservare, conciosiaché inseparabilemente el fondamento della ragione s'acchosti all'ordine della natura: sicchéè necessario di ragione oservare quello che ordinò la natura. El romano popolo dalla natura fu ordinato a inperare. Et questo così si dichiara: come colui mancherebbe dalla perfetione dell'arte che attendessi solo alla forma finale e non si curassi della materia per la quale a essa finale forma si perviene, così la natura mancherebbe se ·ssolo atendessi alla forma huniversale della divina similitudine nello huniverso, et la materia disprezassi; ma la natura non mancha inn–operatione alcuna, essendo ella hopera della intelligenza divina: adunque la natura atende a tutte quelle cose per le quali a l'ultimo fine della intentione sua pervengha. Adunque essendo el fine della ragone humana un certo mezo necessario al fine huniversale della natura, è necessario che la natura a questo atenda. E però Aristotele nel secondo della *Fisicha* pruova che ·lla natura l'opere sue al fine diriza. E non potendo la natura per uno huomo pervenire a questo fine, perché sono molte hoperationi a esso necessarie, che richieghono molti operatori, è necessario che ·lla natura produca molti huomini a produrre l'operationi diverse: et a questo molto aiuta, oltre alla infruenza de' cieli, la virtù de' luoghi inferiori. E per questo veggiamo che alcuni huomini et popoli sono nati atti a signioreggiare et altri a ubbidire, come dicie Aristotile nella *Politicha*: e a ·ccostoro è hutile essere sottoposti et gusto che subgugati sieno. E ·sse così è, non è dubbio che ·lla natura abbia disposto nel mondo huno luogho et una gente atta allo huniversale inperio: altrimenti mancherebbe nel suo proposito.

Qual sia questo populo per le cose dette et per le a dire si vede; et questo è Roma. Questo manifesta Virgilio nel sesto, dove Anchisse così parla ad Enea padre de' Romani: «Altri huomini scholpiranno meglio ne' metalli, et ne' marmi faranno volti quasi vivi, et horeranno meglio innanzi a' gudici, et misureranno e corsi de' cieli: ma ·ttu, Romano, terrai a mente di reggere e popoli con inperio. Queste saranno l'arti tue: dare modo alla pacie, perdonare agli humili, e scacciare e superbi». E nel quarto libro discrive la dispositione del luogho, dove introducie Gove parlante a Merchurio d'Enea in questo modo: «La madre sua bellissima non ce lo promisse tale, e due volte lo difende da l'arme de' Greci; ma disse che sarebbe quello che reggesse la Ytalia piena d'inperio et in battaglia potente». Per le cose dette è manifesto che 'l populo romano fu dalla natura hordinato a inperare. Adunque, sobgoghando a ·ssé la terra, ragonevolmente s'atribuì lo 'nperio.

Capitolo VIII .

Che ‘l gudicio divino nelle cose occhulte può esseremanifesto in due modi: o per ragione, o per fede.

A volere bene ritrovare la verità di quello che cerchiamo, è da sapere che ‘l divino gudicio nelle cose alle volte è manifesto, alle volte è hocculto. E può essere manifesto per due modi: o per ragone, ho per fede. Inperò che alcuni gudìci di Dio sono ai quali la ragone humana co’ propi piedi può pervenire, come a questo: che lo huomo per la salute della patria si debba sottomettere al pericolo; inperò che ·sse la parte si debba mettere a pericolo per salvare el tutto, essendo lo huomo parte della ciptà, come dicie Aristotile nella *Politicha*, debba lo huomo, per salvare la patria, mettere sé a pericolo, come meno bene pel bene maggiore. E ·ccome dicie Aristotile nella *Eticha*: «El bene propio è amabile, el bene comune è più nobile e divino». E questo è gudicio di Dio; altrimenti la humana ragone nella sua rettitudine non seguirebbe la ‘ntentione della natura, e questo è inpossibile. Altri gudici di Dio sono a’ quali la ragone humana non può pervenire per suo vighore, nientedimeno con l’aiuto della fede et di quelle cose che ·ssono nelle Sante Lettere scripte, come a questo: che nessuno, bene che abia morali et intellettuali virtù, et sia inn–esse perfetto, secondo abito et secondo operationi, sanza la fede si può salvare, dato che non mai abbi di Cristo alcuna cosa udita; inperò che questa ragione humana, per sé medesima, non può vedere quello ch’è giusto, ma aiutato dalla fede può. Inperò ch’egli è scripto *Agli Ebrei*: «Inpossibile è sanza la fede piacere a Dio»; et nello *Leviticho* è detto: «Cascuno huomo della casa d’Isdrael che arà morto bue ho pecora o capra ne’ canpi militari ho fuori de’ canpi, et non arà fatto hoferta al Signore presso a l’uscio del tabernacolo, sarà condannato come homicida». L’uscio del tabernacolo significa Cristo, el quale è l’uscio et la chiave dello etterno regnio, come si può intendere per lo Vangelio; l’occisione degli animali significa l’operationi humane. Ma hocculto gudicio di Dio, al quale la humana ragione né per leggie di natura, né per leggie di Scriptura, ma per ispetiale gratia di Dio alcuna volta perviene. E questo si fa in molti modi: alcuna volta per senplice revelatione mediante alcuna disceptatione; alcuna volta per senplice revelatione sola. E questo si fa in’ due modi: o per propria volontà di Dio, o per oratione. Se si fa per volontà di Dio, in due parti si divide: o e’ si fa expressamente, o per segno. Expressamente, come fu revelato el gudicio a Samuel contro a Saulo; per segnio, come fu a Faraone rivelato pe ·segni quello ch’aveva Iddio gudicato della liberatione de’ figliuoli d’Isdrael. Per oratione, come si dice nel secondo di *Paralipomenon*: «Quando

noi non sappiamo quello che noi dobbiamo fare, questo solo ci resta a ·ffare, che gli occhi nostri a ·tte diriziamo». Ma mediante la discettatione in due modi aviene: o per sorte, o per contentione; la quale contentione si chiama ‘certare’, coè ‘certo fare’. Ma per sorte el gudicio di Dio alcuna volta si rivela agli huomini, come apparisce negli *Atti degli Appostoli*, nella sustitutione di Matteo. Per contentione in due modi si manifesta el gudicio di Dio: overamente per conparatione di forze, come aviene tra due conbattenti, e quali si chiamano e duelli, perché tra due è questo conbattimento; overo per contentione di più che ·ssi sforzano chi prima tra loro a uno certo segno perviene, come aviene a quelli che ·cchorono al palio. El primo modo fu figurato nel duello d’Erchole et d’Anteo, del quale fece mentione Lucano nel quarto della *Battaglia farsalicha*, et Hovidio nel nono *Metamorfoseos*; el secondo modo è figurato apresso di que’ medesimi in Atrante et Ipomene nel decimo *Metamorfoseos*. è da sapere che in questi due modi di conbattere è questa conditione, che nell’uno e conbattenti si possino sanza inguria inpedire, come è nel duello, ma nell’altro no; perché quelli che ·ccorono al palio non debbono inpedirsi, benché ‘l Poeta nostro paia che abbi altrimenti sentito nel quinto, quando fece rimunerare Eurialo. E però meglio Tulio nel terzo degli *Hufici* questo vietò, seguitando la sententia di Crisippo, dove e’ dicie in questo modo: «Rettamente sentì Grisippo in questo, come in molte altre cose, quando disse: ‘Chi ·ccorre al palio debba sforzarsi quanto più può di vincere, ma di dare ganbetto a ·ccolui che ·cconbatte co ·llui non debba’». Fatta questa distintione, possiamo pigliare due ragioni al proposito nostro molto eficaci, una dal conbattere degli atleti che ·ccorono al palio, l’altra dal conbattere de’ duelli; e questo porrò ne’ seguenti capitoli.

Capitolo IX .

Che ‘l popolo romano, che avanzò tutti gli altri popoli nelcorere allo inperio, per divina ragone avanzò.

Adunque quel popolo, el quale avanzò tutti gli altri nel correre allo ‘nperio del mondo, per divina ragone avanzò. Perché Dio ha chura di dichiarare la lite huniversale molto più che la particulare; e certamente nelle particulari liti si richiede il divino gudicio, secondo quel proverbio che dicie: «A c-chi Dio la concede, Santo Piero la benedicha». E però non è dubbio che ‘l prevalere de’ conbattenti allo inperio del mondo sia hordinato dal gudicio divino. El popolo romano prevalse a ·ttutti e conbattenti per lo inperio del mondo; e questo sarà manifesto se si considerano e conbattenti, et el premio e ‘l termino. Certamente el premio et el termino fu d’avanzare tutti e mortali, inperò che questo si chiama ‘inperio’. E questo non avenne ad alcuno populo se none al romano, el quale non solamente primo, ma solo, pervenne al termine della battagla, come poco dipoi dichiareremo. El primo che tra mortali si sforzò d’aquistare questo premio fu Nino re degli Assirii, el quale, benché cholla donna sua Semmiramide per novanta anni et più, come dicie Horosio, tentasse con arme di conseguire lo ‘nperio del mondo, et tutta la Asia subgugasse, nientedimeno le parti hoccidentali non sottomisse. Di costoro fa mentione Hovidio nel quarto, dicendo: «Simiramis cinse la ciptà con mura di mattoni»; et dipoi dice: «Raguninsi al corpo di Nino, et sotto l’onbra si nascondino». El secondo che cercò questo inperio fu Neghozzi re degli Egipti; e benché tribulassi el mezo dì et el settantrione, come Orosio narra, nientedimeno nonn–ottenne mai meza la parte della terra, ma nel conbattere con gli Iscipti, innanzi che pervenissi al premio, si fermò. Dipoi Cirro re de’ Persi tentò questo medesimo; el quale, distrupto Banbillonia, et ridotto lo ‘nperio di Banbillonia sopto e Persi, non conseguitato ancora le parti occidentali, sotto Tamiride, reina degli Iscipti, perdé la ‘ntentione sua insieme con la vita. Dopo costoro, Serse, figlíuolo di Dario et re de’ Persi, con tanta moltitudine di gente assaltò el mondo, et con tanta potentia, che trapassò el mare dividente l’Asia dalla Europia, fatto un ponte intra Seston edd–Abidon. Di questa opera mirabile fece menzione Luchano nel secondo libro della *Farsalica pugnia*, così dicendo: «La fama canta che ‘l superbo Serse fece via sopra el mare». Costui finalmente, rimosso dal suo proposito, rimase miserabile, e non poté al palio pervenire. Dipoi Allessandro, re di Macedonia, s’apressòpiù che gli altri al palio della monarchia; mandò anbascadori a’ Romani, chiedendo loro hubbidienza, et, innanzi che eglino gli rispondessino,

inn–Egipto morì nel mezo del suo corso, come narra Livio. Della sepoltura del quale in detto luogho Luchano fa memoria nello ottavo, mentreché riprende el re Tolomeo in questo modo: «Ho hultima generatione della stirpe Lagea che presto perirai, che ·sse' inbastardito, et hubbidirai allo inperio della sirocchia, conciosiaché nella spiloncha tua sagrata sia sepulto el re di Macedonia». «Ho alteza delle riccheze di scienza et sapienza di Dio», qual sarà quello che qui di te non si maravigli? Inperò che quando Allesandro si sforzava d'inpedire nel corso el popolo romano, che ·ccon lui insieme correva al palio, tu ·llo rapisti nel mezo del corso, acciò che la temerità sua più alto non salissi.
Ma che Roma abbi conseguitata la palma di sì degnio palio, per molti testimoni si manifesta; perché Virgilio nel primo così dicie: «Egli è fatato che di qui per certi tenpi futuri discendino e Romani e sieno conduttori, discendenti del sangue Troyano restaurato, e quali et mare et terra al loro inperio soggoghino». Et Lucano nel primo dicie: «E' si divide con ferro de' re et del popolo potente; quella fortuna che ·ttiene el mare, et che ·ttiene la terra e tutto el mondo, non poté tenere due insieme». E Boetio nel secondo, parlando dello inperio del principe de' Romani, così dicie: «Costui nientedimeno regeva e popoli a bacchetta, e quali vede el sole quando sottentra, e quali vede el sole quando nasce, et el settantrione et el mezodì». Ancora testimonia questo Lucha, scriba di Cristo, el quale dice senpre el vero, parlando così: «Mandò Cesare Agusto huno comandamento, che tutta la terra fussi discripta». Per le quali parole possiamo intendere che ·lla huniversale gurisditione della terra allora era sotto e Romani. Per le cose dette è manifesto che 'l popolo romano andò innanzi a tutti quelli che per lo inperio del mondo conbatterono, e però hottenne questo per divino gudicio; che è per ragone ottenere.

Capitolo X .

Che quello che s’aquista per duello, per ragione s’aquista.

Quello che ·ss’aquista per duello, di ragione s’aquista. Inperò che dovunche l’umano gudicio mancha, o per ignoranza o per none avere ricorso al gudicie, acciò che non rimangha adietro e veri gudici, si debba ricorrere a ·ccolui che ·ttanto amò la natura humana che quello ch’ella chiedeva, lui del propio sangue morendo suplì. Onde dicie el salmo: «El Signiore è gusto et amò la giustitia». E questo aviene quando per libero consentimento delle parti, non per odio, ma per amore di gustitia, faccendo conparatione delle forze della anima et del corpo, dipoi si richiede el gudicio: e questa conparatione di conbattere, perché fu trovata in prencipio tra huno et huno, si chiama ‘duello’. Ma senpre si vuole riguardare che, nelle cose belliche, prima si debbano tutte le cose tentare per dicieprationе, et hultimamente conbattere, come Tulio et Vegetio comandano (Vegetio nell’*Arte militare*, et Tulio negli *Hufici*); ancora, nella cura medicinale prima si vuole provare hogni altro rimedio che ‘l ferro e ‘l fuocho; similmente, per avere el gudicio della lite, investigate tutte le vie, hultimamente a questo rimedio richorriamo, costretti da una certa necessità di gustitia. Due ragioni formali del duello apparischono: l’una è hora detta; l’altra di sopra si tocchò, e questo è che né per odio, né per amore, ma per solo zelo della gustitia con comune consenso e duo conbattenti venghino in chanpo. E però Tulio, parlando di questa materia, bene disse: «Le battaglie, che pretendono alla corona dello inperio, debono essere meno acerbe». Adunque, se ·lle ragioni formali del duello s’hanno a conservare, perché altrimenti non sarebbe duello, quegli che ·ssono per necessità di gustitia et comune consenso ragunati pel zelo della gustitia, certamente sono nel nome di Dio congreghati. E ·sse così è, Iddio istà nel mezo di loro, concosiaché nel Vangeloquesto ci promette. E ·sse Dio è presente, non è licito pensare che la gustitia possa perdere, la quale lui sopra tutto ama. E ·sse la gustitia nel duello non può perdere, quello che ss’aquista per duello s’aquista pe rag·one. Questa verità ancora e Gentili innanzi alla evangelicha tronba conobbono, quando e’ cerchavano el gudicio dalla fortuna del duello. Onde Pirro, huomo generoso sì pel sangue d’Acchille, sì etiandio pe’ costumi, rispuose a’ leghati romani mandati a ·llui pe riconperare e prigioni: «Io non apetischo horo, non mi date prezo alcuno; io non fo mercatantia di ghuerra, anzi conbatto per onore; con ferro, non con oro, conbattiamo insieme, e così veggiamo chi vuole la fortuna che regni; proviamo colle virtù nostre chi esalta la fortuna. Io intendo perdonare a ccoloro che ·ccolla virtù loro hanno superata la fortuna;

menategli con voi; io ve gli dono». Quello che Pirro chiama ‘la fortuna’ noi più rettamente chiamiamo ‘divina providentia’. E però si guardino e conbattenti che non si propoghino prezo come cagione di loro conbattere, ché non si chiamerebbe duello, ma merchato di sangue et d’ingustitia; et non sarebbe quivi arbitro Iddio, ma quello anticho nimico, el quale persuadeva liti. Adunque abbino senpre innanzi agli occhi loro e conbattenti, se vogliono essere duelli, none mercatanti di sangue et d’ingustitia, Pirro, el quale conbattendo per lo inperio, come è detto, sprezava l’oro. Ma se contro alla verità dichiarata alcuno s’oppongha della inparità delle forze, come fare si suole, costui si confuterà per la vittoria di Davit contro a Golia; e ·sse e Gentili richiedessono altro, confutino colui per la vittoria d’Ercule conro Anteo. Egli è molto paza cosa extimare che ·lle forze da Dio confortate sieno inferiori alle forze de’ conbattenti. Gà è assai dichiarato che quello che ·ss’aquista per duello s’aquísta per ragone. El popolo romano aquistò lo ‘nperio per duello, e questo si pruova con testimoni degni di fede; nella manifestatione de’ quali non solamente apparirà questo, ma etiandio cò che’ Romani dal loro prencipio combatterono, essersi per duello combattuto. Inperò che nel prencipio, quando si conbatteva della sedia d’Enea, primo padre di questo popolo, Turno re de’ Rutolii vi si contrapuose, e finalmente, per comune consenso d’amendue e re, per conoscere qual fusse el piacimento di Dio, tra loro due fue el conbattimento, come canta Vergilio nell’ultimo. Nella quale battaglia fu tanto la clemenza d’Enea vincitore, che ·sse non avessi veduto apresso a Turno el collare, el quale rubò a Pallante quando l’uccise, gli arebbe perdonata la vita, come dicie Virgilio. E dapoi che germinorono due populi della radicie de’ Romani (e questo fu el popolo romano e l’albano), et del segnio dell’aquila et degli iddii familiare de’ Troyani et degnità dello ‘nperare lungho tenpo si fu conbattuto, inn ultimo, di comune consentimento delle parti, per conoscere l’istantia, per tre fratelli Horatii et per altrectanti fratelli Croatii, nel cospetto de’ re et de’ populi, si conbatté: ove, morti tre conbattitori degli Albani, a due conbattitori de’ Romani l’onore della vittoria si concedette sotto el re Hostilio. E questo tractò diligentemente Livio nella prima parte, et ancora Horosio lo manifesta. Dipoi co’ populi a loro confini, hosservata ogni ragione bellicha, e co’ Sabini et co’ Sanniti, benché si combattessi con gran moltitudine, nientedimeno si conbatté in forma di duello, come narra Livio; nel qual modo di conbattere co’ Sanniti si pentirono del proposito. E questo cantò Lucano nel secondo: «Quante schiere sparse condusse la porta Collina in quel tenpo, quando el capo del mondo et la potenza somma quasi mutò el luogho, e ·lle cose romane quasi cedettono a’ Sanniti». Ma dappoiché ·lle contentioni ytaliche furono cessate, non s’essendo ancora conbattuto co’ Greci, né con gli Africhani, et hopponendosi costoro a’ Romani, contendé Fabritio pe’ Romani et Pirro pe’

Greci, et hottenne Roma; conbatté Scipione per gli Ytaliani et Anibale per gli Africani, et in questa forma di duello Africha hubbidì a Roma, come Livio et gli altri scriptori narrano. Qual sarà di sì grosso ingegnio che non vegha quel populo glorioso avere in forma di duello aquistato lo ‘nperio del mondo? Ben poté dire el ciptadino romano quello che *A Timotteo* disse lo Appostolo: «Egli è riposta per me la corona della gustitia»; et intendeva ch’ell’era ‘riposta’ nella providentia eterna di Dio. Veghano hora e prusuntuosi guristi quanto sieno inferiori a quello spechulo della ragione honde la humana mente specula questi princìpi, et taccino, e ·ssieno contenti gudichare secondo el senso della legge. Egli è gà manifesto che ‘l populo romano per duello aquistò lo ‘nperio: adunque pe rag·ione lo aquistò; e questo è el proposto principale di questo libro.

Infino quy s’è dichiarato el proposito nostro per le ragioni, le quali si fondano ne’ princìpi rationali; ma da hora in là è da manifestare questo medesimo pe’ princìpi della fede cristiana. Mossonsi con gran furore et con vani pensieri contro a il principato romano coloro che ·ssi chiamano zelatori della fede cristiana, et non hanno avuto misericordia de’ poveri di Cristo, e quali non solamente sono flauldati nelle rendite della chiesa, ma etian sono rapiti loro tutto die e patrimoni; e diventa la chiesa povera, mentreché, figniendo la gustitia, non la mettono inn–effetto. Certamente questa povertà non c aviene sanza el gudicio di Dio, conciosiaché non si sovengha a’ poveri delle facultà eclesiastiche che ·ssono e loro patrimoni; e dallo ‘nperio, che offeriscie, non sieno tenuti con gratitudine. Ritornino honde vennono: vennono bene, ritornano male, perché sono cose ben date et male possedute. Che a tali pastori? Che ·sse la sustanza della chiesa si disperge, mentre ché ·lle propietà de’ propinqui loro s’acrescono? Ma egli è forse el meglio seguire el proposito, e con pietoso silentio aspettare el soccorso del Salvatore nostro.

Dico adunque che ·sse el romano inperio non fu di ragione, Cristo nascendo presunse cosa ingusta; questa seconda parte è falsa: adunque el contraditorio della prima è vero. Inperò che ·lle cose contraditorie hanno questa conditione, che ·sse l’una è falsa, l’altra è vera. E ·cche sia falso che Cristo prosumessi cose inguste, non bisogna mostrarlo a’ fedeli: inperò che ·cchi è fedele concede questo; chi non lo concede non è fedele; e ·sse non è fedele, per lui non si cercha questa ragone. Et questa conseguenza così dichiaro: colui che per eletione seguita uno comandamento, mostra con opera quello essere gusto; et essendo l’opere più eficaci a persuadere che ·lle parole, come dice Aristotile nella *Eticha*, più persuade che ·ss’egli affermasse con sermone. Ma Cristo, come testimonia Lucha suo scriptore, sotto lo edipto della autorità romana volle nascere della Madre Vergine, acciò che in quella singulare discritione della generatione humana el Figliuolo di Dio, fatto huomo, fussi discripto huomo: e questo fu uno

confermare quello editto. E forse è più santa cosa extimare che quello editto divinamente huscì per Cesare, acciò che ·cColui, che ·ttanto tenpo s’era astettato nella conpagnia de’ mortali, con tutti gli huomini insieme sé medesimo consegniassi. Adunque Cristo con hopera persuadette che ‘l comandamento dato dallo inperadore romano fussi gusto. E conciosiaché al comandare gustamente ne seguiti la gurisditione, è necessario che ·cchi persuadette el comandamento essere gusto, persuadessi ancora la gurisditione, la quale, se nonn–era di ragone, non era gusta. è da notare che l’argumento sunto alla distrutione del conseguente, benché per sua forma tengha per qualche luogho, nientedimeno la forza sua dimostra per la seconda figura, se ·ssi riduce così l’argumento per la positione dello antecedente secondo la figura prima. Adunque così s’argumenta: ogni cosa ingusta si persuade ingustamente; Cristo non persuade ingustamente: adunque non persuade cosa ingusta.

Capitolo XI.

Che se lo ‘nperio romano non fu per ragione, el pecchatod’Adamo in Cristo non fu punito.

E se lo ‘nperio romano non fu per ragione, el pecchato d’Adamo in Cristo non fu punito; ma questo è falso: adunque egli è vero el contradittorio di quello onde questo seguita. La falsità del conseguente apariscie così: inperò che, essendo noi pecchatori tutti pel pecchato d’Adamo, secondo che dicie lo Apostolo «Come per uno huomo nel mondo entrò el pecchato, et pel pecchato la morte, così in tutti gli huomini entrò la morte dal tenpo in qua che peccorono»; se di quel pecchato non si fusse fatto satisfatione per la morte di Cristo, saremo ancora figliuoli della yra per la natura depravata. Ma questo non è, dicente lo Appostolo *Ad Efesi*, quando parla del Padre: «Costui ci distinò nella adotione di figliuoli per Gieso Cristo in lui, secondo el proposito della voluntà sua, a ·llaulde et gloria della sua gratia, nella quale gratificò noi nel suo diletto Figliuolo, nel quale abiamo redentione pel sangue suo, et la remessione de’ pecchati secondo le riccheze della sua gloria, la quale soprabondò in noi». Et ancora Cristo dicie apresso a Santo Govanni, mentreché patisce la punitione, così: «Consumatum est», che vuole dire, ‘egli è adenpiuto’; inperò che dov’egli è adenpiuto non resta a ·ffare alcuna cosa. Per intendere la convenienza, è da ·ssapere che ·lla ‘punitione’ non è senplicemente ‘pena allo inguriante’, ma ‘pena data allo inguriante da ·cchi ha gurisditione di punire’; onde, se ·lla pena non è data dal gudicie hordinario, non è ‘punitione’ ma più tosto è ‘inguria’. Onde lui diceva a Moysè: «Chi ·tti costituì gudicie sopra noi?». Adunque, se Cristo non avesse patito sotto gudicie ordinario, quella pena non sarebbe suta punitione. Ma il gudicie ordinario non poteva essere se ·nnone uno che avessi gurisditione sopra tutta la generatione humana, conciosiaché tutta la humana generatione, come disse el Profeta, in quella carne di Cristo portante e dolori nostri fussi punita. E sopra tutta la generatione humana Tiberio Cesare, del quale era vichario Pilato, nonn–arebbe avuto gurisditione, se ‘l romano inperío non fusse stato per ragone. Di qui nasce che Erode, benché non sapesse quello che si faceva, come ancora Caifas non seppe quel che si disse, di celeste diliberatione rimandò Cristo a Pilato a gudichare, chome parla Lucha nel suo Vangelio. Erode l’aveva commesso, non tenendo e luogho di Tiberio Cesare sopto el segno della aquila ho del senato, ma re per singulare segnio da ·llui hordinato, et sotto el segno del regnio a ·ssé commesso gubernando. Restino adunque di turbare et vituperare el romano inperio coloro che fingono d’essere figliuoli della chiesa, conciosiaché

veghano lo sposo della chiesa, Cristo, avere quello in tal modo aprovato nell’uno et nello altro termino della sua militia. Gà sufficientemente stimo avere dimostrato che ‘l popolo romano per ragione sopra ·ttutti gli altri s’atribuì lo ‘nperio. O felice populo, o Italia gloriosa, se quello che ‘ndebolì lo ‘nperio tuo mai non fussi nato, overo non fussi stata la sua pia intentione inghannata!

LIBRO III

Capitolo I.

Proemio del terzo libro della Monarchia di Dante, et preparatione a mostrareche l'autorità del monarcha overo inperio dipende da Dio sanza alchuno mezzo.

«Io ho chiuso le bocche a' lioni, et loro non m'hanno nociuto, perché nella presenza di Colui s'è in me trovata gustitia».Inel prencipio di questa hopera fu nostro proposito ricerchare tre quistioni, secondo che patissi la presente materia; delle quali due ne' libri di sopra stimo essere sufficientemente tractate. Ora ci resta trattare della terza. E perché la verità di questa non si può dichiarare sanza vergognia et rossore d'alcuni, sarà forse in me qualche chagione d'indegniatione. Ma la Verità dal suo inmutabile trono ci priegha; et anche Salamone, entrando nella selva de' *Proverbi*, c amaestra che dobiamo meditare la verità et detestare la tirannide; et anchora el preceptore de' costumi, Aristotile, ci conforta che doviamo, per difendere la verità, distrugere ancora le propie nostre hoppenioni. E però piglierò fidanza insieme con le parole di Daniello profeta premesse, nelle quali la divina potenza è chiamata lo scudo del difensore et de' difesi (secondo el primo amunimento di Pagholo, dicente colui, «vestitosi la coraza della fede»), nel caldo di quello charbone, el quale huno de' Serafini prese dal celeste altare, et tocchò le labra d'Isaya; e ·ccosì io, presa questa fidanza, enterrò nella presente battaglia, confidandomi ancora nel braccio di Colui che ·ccol suo sangue dalla potenza delle tenebre ci liberò, contro allo inpio et bugardo mondo, el quale co' suoi aguati ci conbatte. Sotto lo aiuto di Costui, che temerò io, conciosiaché ·llo Spirito coetterno al Padre et al Figliuolo dicha per la boccha di Davit: «El gusto sarà nella memoria eterna, et non temerà del male hudire?» Adunque la quistione della quale prima abiamo a ricerchare tra due grandi lumi si rivolge, e questo è tra 'l romano pontefice e 'l romano principe; et cerchasi se l'autorità del monarcha romano, el quale di ragione è monarcha del mondo, come nel secondo abiamo provato, sanza mezo dipende da Dio, hovero per mezo d'alcuno suo vichario ho ministro, el quale intendo sucessore di Piero, che veramente porta le chiavi del celeste regnio.

Capitolo II.

Che Iddio non vuole quello che ripugnia alla natura.

Chome nelle superiori quistioni abiàno fatto, similemente nella solutione di questa si vuole pigliare qualche prencipio fermo, nella verità del quale si formino gli argumenti della verità che al presente si ricercha; inperò che sanza un prencipio prefisso non gova affaticharsi, ancora dicendo el vero, conciosiaché solo el prencipio è la radicie del pigliare e mezi. Adunque questa verità inrefragabile si presupone: che Dio non vuole quel che ripugnia alla natura. Inperò che ·sse questo non fussi vero, el suo contradittorio non sarebbe falso, el quale è: che ·dDio non nonvoglia quel che ripugnia alla intenzione della natura. E se questo non è falso, non sono false ancora quelle chose che di questo seguitano; inperò ch'egli è inpossibile, nelle chose necessarie, el conseguente essere falso, non essendo falso l'antecedente. Ma al non nonvolere l'uno de' due seguita per nicistà, o volere o non volere; come al odiare per necessità seghuita o amare ho none amare; inperò che 'l none amare non è hodiare, e 'l non volere non è nonvolere, come per sé medesimo è manifesto. Le qua' cose se non sono false, non sarà falsa questa: 'Iddio vuole quel che non vuole'; la falsità della quale non ha supperiore. E ·cche sia vero quello che qui si dicie, così dichiaro: egli è manifesto che Dio vuole el fine della natura, altrimenti el cielo si moverebbe invano, la quale cosa non si debba dire. Se Iddio volessi lo 'npedimento del fine, vorrebbe ancora el fine dello inpedimento, altrimenti vorebbe questo invano; e perch'egli è el fine dello inpedimento el none essere della cosa inpedita, seguiterebbe che Iddio volessi non essere el fine della natura, el quale si dicie volere essere. Inperò che ·sse Iddio non volessi lo 'npedimento del fine, come E' non volessi così seguiterebbe al non volere E' nulla si curerebbe dello inpedimento, o fussi o non fussi. Ma ·cchi non cura lo 'npedimento, non chura quella chosa che ·ssi può inpedire, et conseguentemente non l'ha nella voluntà; e quello che cascuno non ha nella voluntà, non vuole. Per la qual cosa, se 'l fine della natura può essere inpedito, di necessità seguita che Dio non vuole el fine della natura; e ·ccosì seguita quel di prima, e questo è: Iddio volere quel che non vuole. Adunque è verissimo quel prencipio, del cui contradittorio tante absorde cose seguitano.

Capitolo III.

Come tre generationi di huomini fano resistenza a quello che in questolibro s'intende di provare, che è che l'autorità dello inperio dipende da Diosanza alchuno mezo.Le quali generationi sono queste: el papa et alcunialtri pastori, la prima; diverse generationi di sacerdoti et riligiosiprusuntuosi, ingnioranti et cupidissimi, la seconda; alcuni altrichiamati decretisti, ingnioranti di teologia et filosophia, la terza.

Nel prencipio di questa quistione è da 'ntendere che ·lla verità della quistione prima fu più da manifestare per levare l'ignioranza che per levare la lite; ma la verità della seconda quistione fu per levare l'ignoranza e 'l litigio: molte cose sono che noi non sappiamo, et nientedimeno non ne litighiamo. Inperò che 'l geometra non sa la quadratura del circulo, et anche non ne litigha; el teolago non sa el numero degli angoli, et di quello non fa lite; e lo Egiptio non sa la civilità degli Iscitii, et anche della loro civilità non contende. Certamente la verità di questa terza quistione ha tanto litigio che ·ccome agli altri suole ingnioranza essere chagione di lite, chosì qui sia maggiormente la lita chagione d'igniorantia. Agli huominiche volano collo appitito innanzi alla consideratione della ragione, senpre questo seguita: che ·lloro, mal disposti, e posposto e lume della ragione, sono tirati come ciechi dallo affetto, e pertinacemente la loro cechità nieghano. Onde spesso aviene che ·lla falsità non solamente ha el patrimonio, ma che molti, de' suoi termini huscendo, dischorrino pe' canpi d'altri, ove loro nulla intendendo, nulla sono intesi; e ·ccosì provocono alcuni a ira et indegnatione, altri a riso. Adunque contro alla verità che qui si ricercha tre generationi di huomini massime fanno resistenza. Perché el sommo pontefice, vichario di Cristo et sucessore di Piero, al quale noi non dobbiamo cò che dobbiamo a Cristo ma ciò che dobiamo a Piero, contro a ·nnoi insurge forse pel zelo delle chiavi; et ancora altri pastori della gregge cristiana, et altri ancora, e quali credo solo dal zelo della madre Eclesia essere mossi; costoro alla verità che io ho a mostrare, forse per zelo et non per superbia, contradichono. Ma alcuni altri, la cupidità de' quali hostinata ha spento el lume della ragione, ed essendo dal padre diavolo si chiamano figliuoli della chiesa, non solo in questa quistione muovono lite, ma hanno inn–abominio el nome del sagratissimo principato, e così negherebono e veri prencìpi delle quistioni superiori et della presente sanza vergognia. Sono alcuni altri chiamati decretalisti, ignioranti di teologia et di filosophya, e quali con tutta la 'ntentione si danno a' loro dicreti, e quali pure credo che ·ssieno d'avere in veneratione; ma costoro, credo, sperando che ·lla

facultà loro prevaglia, deroghano allo inperio. E non è da maravigliarsi di questo, perch'io ho gà hudito alcuno di loro dire, et sfacciatamente affermare, e loro decreti essere fondamento della fede: la quale assurda sententia dall'oppenione de' mortali lievino coloro che ·ssanza custitutione di chiesa credettono in Cristo venturo o presente ho venuto, et credendo in lui sperorono, e sperando arsono di carità, et ardendo, sanza dubbio alcuno, a ·llui sono fatti coeredi. Et acciò che ·ttali huomini della presente battaglia siano in tutto schacciati, è da notare ch'egli è alcuna scriptura innanzi alla chiesa, alcuna insieme co essa, alcuna dopo lei. Et inanzi alla chiesa è el Vecchio et el Nuovo Testamento, el quale «è mandato inn–etterno», come dice el Profeta; inperò che questo è quello che dicie la chiesa, parlando allo sposo: «Tira me dopo te». Et con la chiesa insieme sono que' venerandi concili principali, ne' quali essere Cristo stato presente nessuno fedele dubita, conciosiaché noi abiamo Cristo avere detto a' discepoli, avendo a ·ssalire in cielo, «Eccho io sono con voi hogni dì, insino alla consumatione del seculo», come Matteo testimonia. Sono ancora le scripture de' dottori, d'Agostino et degli altri, e quali avere avuto l'aiuto dello Spirito Santo chi dubiterà? e ·cchi ne dubitassi non arebbe e frutti loro veduti, e ·sse gli avessi veduti non gli arebbe ghustati. Dopo la chiesa sono le costitutioni, le quali chiamano dicretali; le quali, benché sieno da venerare per la autorità apostolicha, nientedimeno s'hanno a posporre alla fondamentale Scriptura, conciosiaché Cristo abbi ripreso e sacerdoti del contrario. Inperò che dimandando loro «Per che chagione e discepoli tuoi trapassano gli ordini degli antichi? » — e questo è ch'egli non oservano e ·lavarsi le mani — , a costoro Cristo rispuose, apresso a Santo Matteo: «Et voi perché trapassate el comandamento di Dio per le vostre costitutioni?». Nella quale cosa assai significhò loro che ·lla ordinatione s'aveva a posporre. E ·sse ·lle costitutioni della chiesa sono dopo la chiesa, come è dichiarato, è necessario che ·lla autorità della chiesa non dipenda da esse costitutioni, ma ·ll'autorità delle costitutioni dalla chiesa. E ·ccostoro che hanno solo queste costitutioni, come dicemo, di questa battaglia si vogliono rimuovere. E' bisognia nel ricerchare questa verità proccedere per quelle cose, delle quali l'autorità della chiesa dipende. Adunque, fatta que sta conclusione, si debbono rimuovere da questa ghuerra coloro che ·ccoperti di pelo di cervio, si vantano d'essere pecore bianche nella divina gregge. Costoro sono figliuoli di iniquità, e quali, per meglio adenpiere e loro vitii, prosternano la madre, e frategli schacciano, et finalmente non vogliono avere gudicie. Inperò in che modo si cercherebbe egli con esso loro ragioni, conciosiaché ·lloro, hocchupati dalla cupidità, non veghino e principii? Per la qual cosa solo con quegli conbatteremo, e quali, indotti da alcuno zelo inverso la chiesa loro madre, la verità che qui si cercha non conoscono. Co' quali io

incominco in questo libro la battaglia per la salute della verità, usando quella reverenza la quale è tenuta a usare el pio figliuolo inverso el padre, pio inverso la madre, pio inverso Cristo et chiesa et pastore, et inverso tutti quegli che ·cconfesano la cristiana religione.

Capitolo IV.

Confuta certe hoppenioni colle quali alcuni inpugnianocontro alla autorità dello ‘nperio.

Choloro adunque, contro a’ quali sarà tutta la seguente disputatione, affermano l’autorità dello inperio dipendere dalla autorità della chiesa, come lo artefice ministro dal capo maestro; et sono mossi da più argumenti tracti della Scriptura, et ancora da alcune cose fatte dal pontefice et dallo inperadore; nientedimeno non hanno gudicio alcuno di ragione. Inprima dicono, secondo el *Genesi*, che Iddio fece due grandi lumi — coè uno maggiore et huno minore — acciò che d’uno fusse sopra el dì et l’altro sopra la notte; e questo intendono per allegoria, che — ·ll’uno sia lo spirituale et l’altro il tenporale reggimento. Dipoi argumentano così: che ·c-come la luna, che è el minore lume, non ha luce se non quanto riceve dal sole, così il regnio tenporale non ha autorità se non quanto dallo spirituale riceve.

E per iscogliere questa loro ragione et l’altre, è da notare che ·ccome dicie Aristotile nelli *Elenci*, la solutione dello argumento è la manifestatione dello erore. E perché lo errore può essere nella materia et nella forma dello argumento, in due modi si può errare: o prosuponendo el falso, o argumentando sanza hordine; e queste due cose apponeva Aristotile a Parmenide et Melisso, dicendo: «Costoro acceptano el falso, et none argumentano». Io piglio qui in largho modo ‘il falso’ per ‘la cosa innopinabile’, la quale nella materia probabile ha natura di falso. Ma ·ss’egli è errore nella forma, debba distruggere la conclusione colui che vuole solvere, mostrando non essere osservata la forma dello argumento. E ·sse egli è errore nella materia, o egli è perché ‘senplicemente’ s’è acceptato el falso o ‘in qualche parte’. Se ‘senplicemente’, si debbe solvere distrugendo la propositione assunta; et se ‘inn–alcuna parte’, per distintione.

Notato questo, è ancora da considerare, per intendere meglio la solutione fatta qui ho ·cche s’ha a ·ffare, che ·ssi può errare circha el misticho senso o cercando dove e’ non è, o pigliando altrimenti che egli sia. Per la prima parte dicie Agustino ne ·libro *Della Ciptà di Dio*: «Non si debba credere che tutte le cose che ·ssi narrano significhino alcuno effetto; ma per cagione di quelle cose che ·ssignificano, si pigliano ancora delle cose che nulla significhano. Solo il vomere divide la terra; ma per potere fare questo, anchora l’altre parti dello aratro sono necessarie». Per la qual cosa esso ancora disse nel libro della *Dottrina cristiana*, a questo medesimo proposito, che ·cchi sente altrimenti nelle Scripture che ·ccolui che ·lle scripse «è ·ccosì ingannato come se alcuno lascasse la via retta, et

per lungho circhuito pervenisse a la fine medesima della via retta»; e dopo questo agugnie così: «Vuolsi dimostrare, acciò che, per consuetudine di deviarsi, ancora si vada per obliquo». Finalmente significa la chagione perché questo si debba schifare nelle Scripture, dicendo: «La fede dubita se ·ll'autorità della Divina Scriptura vacilla». Et io dico che ·sse tali cose si fanno per igniorantia, si vuole con diligentia la ingniorantia corregiere e perdonare a ·ccolui che teme il lione negli nugholi; et se si fanno a studio, con quelli che ·ccosì fanno non si debbe altrimenti fare che ·ccolli tiranni, li quali non seguitano le publiche costitutioni a utilità comune, ma tirano al propio. O extrema sceleratezza, etiandio s'egli avengha nel sognio, male usare la intentione dello eterno Spirito! Non si peccha qui contro a Moysè, Davit, Iacob, Matteo et Pagolo, ma contro allo Spirito Santo che parla in loro. Molti sono li scriptori del divino sermone, uno solo dittatore èe Iddio, il quale ha degniato quello che a ·llui piace per molti scriptori a ·nnoi exprichare. Notate queste cose, al sopradetto proposito dico a destrutione di quello detto ove affermano che questi due lumi inportano due reggimenti, nel quale detto tutta la forza dello argumento consiste. E che quel detto non si possa sostenere, per due vie mostrare possiamo. Prima, essendo questi reggimenti accidenti dello huomo, parrebbe che Iddio avessi perverso l'ordine, producendo prima li accidenti che 'l subgepto propio: et questo non si debbe dire di Dio. Quelli due lumi sono producti nel quarto dì, e lo huomo nel sesto. Oltr'a questo, conciosiaché questi reggimenti dirizino lo huomo a certi fini, come di sopto dichiareremo, se lo huomo avessi perseverato nello stato della innocenza, nel quale fu fatto da Dio, non arebbono avuto bisognio di tale directione: dunque sono questi reggimenti rimedio contro alla infermità del pecchato. E lo huomo nel quarto dì non solamente non era pecchatore, ma etiandio in niuno modo nonn–era: era superfluo produrre li rimedii; et questo è contro alla bontà divina. Colui sarebbe stolto medico, il quale, innanzi che lo huomo nascessi, ordinasse lo 'npiastro all'appostemate futuro. Adunque non si debba dire che Dio nel quarto dì abbia fatto questi due reggimenti, e però non poté essere la 'ntentione di Moysè quella che ·lloro finghono. Puòssi ancora questa bugia per distintione disolvere: certamente egli è più leggieri contra l'aversario la ·ssulutione che distingue, perché non si pruova colui essere in tutto bugiardo, come si fa nella destrutione. Dico adunque che, benché la luna nonn abia lucie abondantemente se non dal sole, non seguita però che ·lla luna sia dal sole. Sicché si debba sapere che altro è l'essere della luna, altro la virtù sua, altro l'operatione. Quanto allo essere, ella non dipende inn–alcuno modo dal sole, né etiandio in quanto alla virtù, né quanto alla hoperatione senplicemente, perché 'l suo movimento è dal Primo motore, et la 'nfruentia sua è da' suoi propri razzi: ella ha per sé alcuna lucie, come nella sua hoscuratione si manifesta. Ma quanto

all’operare meglio et più eficacemente, riceve qualche ·ccosa dal sole, e questa è abondanza di lucie, per la quale più virtuosamente adopera. Similmente dico che il tenporale non riceve dallo spirituale l’essere, né ancora la virtù, che è la sua autorità, né ancora l’operatione senplicemente; ma bene riceve da lui questo, che più vertuosamente adoperi per lo lume della gratia, el quale e in cielo et in terra gl’infonde la beneditione del pontefice. Adunque l’argumento peccherà in forma, perché quello che è predicato nella concrusione non è l’extremità della propositione magore; perché proccede così: la luna riceve lume dal sole, il quale è reggimento spirituale; el regimento tenporale è la luna; adunque el tenporale reggimento riceve l’autorità dallo spirituale. Inperò che nella extremità della magiore elli pongono ‘la lucie’, et nel predicato della concrusione ‘l’autorità’, le quali sono cose diverse in subgetto et in ragione, come veduto abiamo.

Capitolo V.

Confuta che la figura de' figliuoli di Gacob, coè Leviet Giuda, non è figura del pastore et del monarcha.

Costoro assummono etiandio argumento dalla lettera di Moysè, dicendo che del pettignione di Gacob uscì la figura di questi due reggimenti, coè Levi et Giuda: de' quali l'uno fu padre del sacerdotio, coè Levi, l'altro del reggimento tenporale, coè Giuda. Dipoi così argumentano: quella conparatione che ·ffu tra Levi et Giuda è tra ·lla chiesa et lo inperio; Levi precedette Giuda in natività, come dichiara la lettera: adunque la chiesa precede nella autorità l'inperio. Questo facilmente si solve, perché quello che dicono, che Levi et Giuda, figliuoli di Iacob, figurano questi reggimenti, si potrebbe, senplicemente distrugendo, disolvere: ma concedasi pure loro questo. E quando argumentano 'come Levi precedette in natività, così la chiesa nella autorità', dico similemente che altro è el predicato della concrusione, et altro la extremità della magiore: inperò che altro è 'l'autorità' et altro 'la natività', per subgiepto et per ragione; et però si pecca nella forma. Et è uno processo simile a questo: A precede B in C; D et E hanno tra ·lloro conperatione come A et B: adunque D precede E in F; ma invero F et C sono diversi. Ma se pure costoro facessono resistenza dicendo che F seghuita al C, et questo è l'autorità alla natività, et per lo antecedente bene si riferisce el conseguente, come lo animale per lo huomo, dico che questo è falso: perché sono molti maggiori per natività che non solamente non precedono inn–autorità, ma sono da più giovini preceduti, come spesso è manifesto ne' loro ordini, dove li più http://www.braidense.it/dire.html giovani inn–autorità eclesiasticha precedono li più vecchi. E ·ccosì questa resistenza erra, ponendo per chagione quello che non è chagione.

Capitolo VI.

Confuta che Samuello nella Scriptura non fighura el papa,et Saul non fighura lo inperadore.

Dalla lettera del primo libro *Delli Re* assumono la creatione et dipositione di Saul, dicendo che Saul re prima posto in trono, fu poi deposto per Samuel, che in vecie di Dio comandò a ·ccolui. E di qui argumentano che ·ccome colui, vichario di Dio, ebbe autorità di dare et torre el tenporale reggimento et trasferirlo inn– altri, così hora il vichario di Dio, huniversale preside della chiesa, ha autorità di dare, torre et trasferire lo scetro del tenporale ghoverno: e di questo sanza dubbio seguiterebbe che dalla chiesa dipendesse l'autorità dello inperio. A questo diciamo, destruendo quello che dicono Samuel vichario di Dio, perché non come vichario, ma ·cchome spetiale leghato a questo, et come nuntio referente lo expresso mandato di Dio, fece questo. La qual cosa così si dichiara, perché apunto quello che Iddio disse, solo fece et referì. Altro è essere vicario, altro nuntio et ministro, come altro è essere dottore et altro interpetre. Inperò che vicario è colui al quale la iurisditione è conceduta con leggie et con arbitrio; et però, intra li termini della iurisditione commessa, per leggie ho per arbitrio può fare contro alcuna cosa che 'l signiore non conosce; ma il nuntio non può, se none in quanto nuntio; et come il martello nella virtù solo del fabro adopera, così il nuntio nel solo arbitrio di colui che 'l manda. Adunque non seguita che ·sse Iddio per Samuel nuntio fece questo, el vicario di Dio lo possa fare. Molte cose Dio ha fatte, fa et farà, che 'l vicario di Dio, et sucessore di Pietro, non può fare; et però l'argumento loro è 'dal tutto alla parte', così: 'l'uomo può vedere et hudire; adunque l'occhio può vedere et hudire'. Et questo non vale, ma varrebbe 'destruendo' così: 'lo huomo non può volare, adunque non possono le braccia dello huomo volare'. Et similmente così: 'Dio non può fare pel nuntio che ·lle cose generate non sieno generate, secondo la sententia d'Aghatone; adunque il suo vicario no ·llo può fare'.

Capitolo VII.

Confuta che ·llo incenso et l'oro che ·ffu portato da' Magia Cristo non fighura nel pastore la signioria delle cose tenporali et spirituali.

Costoro pigliano ancora dalla lettera di Matheo l'oferta de' Magi, dicendo Cristo avere ricevuto insieme incenso et horo a significhatione che ·llui era signiore et governatore delle cose spirituali et tenporali; di qui inferiscono che 'l vicario di Cristo è signiore et governatore delle cose medesime, et conseguentemente ha in tutte e due autorità. Rispondendo a questo, confesso la lettera e 'l senso di Matteo, ma in tutto niegho quello che di qui si sforzano d'inferire. Costoro così argomentano: 'Iddio è signiore delle cose tenporali et ispirituali; et il pontefice è vichario di Dio: adunque egli è signiore di queste due cose'. L'una et l'altra propositione è vera, ma il mezo è variato, et arguiscesi in quatro termini, nelli quali la figura dello argumento non si salva, come mostra Aristotile nello libro dello argumentare senplicemente. Inperò che altro è 'Iddio', il quale si piglia per subgietto nella magiore, et altro nella minore 'vicario'. E ·cchi ·ss'opponesse dicendo che vichario è equivalente, sarebbe oppositione innutile, perché nessuno vichario divino ho humano può essere equivalente alla autorità principale: e questo facilmente si manifesta. Inperò che noi sappiamo che 'l sucessore di Piero non è equale alla autorità divina, almeno nelle operationi della natura: inperò ch'elli non potrebbe fare la terra salire insù et il fuoco ingiù discendere per lo huficio a ·llui commesso. Et ancora non si possono tutte le cose a ·llui commettere da Dio, inperò che Iddio in nessuno modo potrebbe commettere la potenza del creare et battizare; et questo manifestamente si pruova, benché 'l Maestro delle *Sententie* nel quarto dicesse el contrario. Ancora sappiamo che 'l vicario dello huomo non è equivalente a ·llui, in quanto a questo che è vichario, inperò che nessuno può dare quello che non è suo. L'autorità principale non è del prencipe se none a uso, perché nessuno prencipe può autorità a ·ssé medesimo dare; ma può bene ricevere et lascare, ma non può altri creare, perché la criatione del principe dal principe non dipende. Et s'è così, è manifesto che nessuno principe può sostituire vicario a ·ssé in tutto equivalente; per la quale cosa la detta oppositione non ha eficacia alcuna.

Capitolo VIII.

Che quel detto di Cristo a Pietro nel Vangelo, «Cò che tu legherai e scoglierai in terra sarà leghato e scolto in cielo», non denota però che'l sucessore di Pietro per concessione di Dio possa solvere le leggi e dicreti delloinperio et ancora solvere et leghare le leggi et dicreti del tenporale ghoverno.

Ancora pigliano dalla medesima lettera el detto di Cristo a Pietro, «Cò che legherai in terra, sarà leghato in cielo, et ciò che scoglierai sarà scolto»; e questo vogliono che ·ssia detto similemente a tutti gli appostoli, per la lettera di Matteo et di Giovanni; honde arguiscono el sucessore di Pietro, per concessione di Dio, potere leghare e scorre; et di qui inferiscono potere solvere le leggi et decreti dello in perio, et ancora solvere et leghare leggi et decreti pel temporale governo: onde bene seghuiterebbe quel che dicono. Rispondereno a questo per distintione, contro alla maggiore del loro argumento, che dice così: 'Piero poté scorre et leghare tutte le cose; el sucessore di Piero può tutte le cose che può Piero; adunque el sucessore di Piero può tutte le cose scorre et leghare'. Honde inferiscono lui potere scorre et leghare l'autorità et dicreti dello inperio. Io concedo la maggiore, la minore no sanza distintione. E però dico che questo segnio huniversale, quando diciamo 'tutte le cose', el quale s'inchiude in 'cascuna cosa', non distribuisce mai fuori dell'anbito del termine distributo. Inperò che ·ss'io dicho 'ogni animale corre', quello 'ogni' si distribuisce per ogni cosa che ·ssi contiene sopto la generatione degli animali; et se io dico 'ogni huomo corre', quello 'ogni' non si distribuisce se non per que' che ·ssono subgetti a questo termino 'huomo'; et quando dicho 'ogni gramatico', la distributione più si strignie. Sicché si vuole senpre vedere quel che 'l segnio huniversale distribuisce, e, veduto questo, facilmente apparirà quanto la sua distributione s'intenda, conosciuto la natura et l'anbito del termine distributo. Onde quando si dicie 'qualunque legherai', se questo 'qualunque' si pigliassi assolutamente, sarebbe vero quel che dicono; e non solo potre' fare questo, ma etiam scogliere la moglie dal marito et legharla ad altri, vivente el primo; e questo non può a gniun modo. Potre' ancora scorre me non pentato, la qual cosa Iddio non potre' fare. E però è manifesto che non si vuole assolutamente pigliare quella distribuzione, ma per rispetto a qualche ·cchosa; et quello a ·cche ella raguardi è assai evidente, se si considera quel che a ·llui si concede, circha la qual cosa quella distributione è subgunta. Perché dicie Cristo a Piero: «Io ti darò le chiavi del celeste regnio»; e questo è: 'Io ti farò portinaio di quello regnio'. E po' e' dice: «Qualunque cosa potrai scorre et leghare», intendendosi:

‘Qualunque cosa s’aspetta a detto huficio potrai scorre et leghare’. E ·ccosì il segnio huniversale, el quale s’inchiude in ‘qualunque cosa’, èe ristretto nella sua distributione dall’uficio delle chiavi del celeste regnio. E ·ccosì piglando, è vera quella propositione, ma none assolutamente. E però dicho che, benché ‘l sucessore di Piero, secondo la convenienza dello huficio commesso a Piero, possa scorre et leghare, non seghuita però per questo che possa scorre et leghare e dicreti dello inperio, come loro dicevano, se già più holtre non si provassi questo aspettarsi allo huficio delle chiavi; el contrario del quale di sotto mosteremo.

Capitolo IX.

Che’ due coltelli di Pietro nel Vangelo di Lucha non denotanoné significhano el regimento spirituale et tenporale.

Pigliano ancora el detto di Lucha, hove Piero dicie a Cristo «Eccho qui sono due coltelli»; et dicono che per due coltelli s’intendono e due predetti reggimenti, e quali disse Piero essere ‘quivi’, intendendo ‘quivi’ ‘apresso di sé’: onde arguiscono que’ due reggimenti, secondo autorità, consistere apresso el sucessore di Piero. A questo diremo, distruendo quel senso in che l’argumento si fonda. Et dicono che’ due coltelli da Piero assegniati significano e due reggimenti: la qual cosa si vuole neghare, sì perché la risposta di Piero non sarebbe secondo la ‘ntentione di Cristo, sì perché Piero per suo chostume subito rispondeva alla superficie delle cose. E ·cche la risposta non fusse secondo la ‘ntentione di Cristo sarà manifesto se si considera le parole precedenti, et la cagione delle parole. Sicché è da ·ssapere che questo fu detto nel dì della Cena; onde Lucha di sopra così cominca: «Venne el dì degli azimi, nel quale era necessario fare pasqua»; nella quale Cena predisse Cristo della passione che a ·llui s’apressava, nella quale bisognava che da’ sua discepoli si seperassi. E vuolsi notare che dove queste parole intervenono, erano insieme tutti e discepoli; onde poco dopo le parole predette disse Lucha: «Et venuto l’ora, sedé a mensa coi dodici discepoli». Dipoi, continovando el parlare, venne a questo: «Quando io vi mandai sanza sacchetto et tascha et calzari mancòv’egli alcuna cosa? Rispuosono loro: Nulla. Disse egli a ·lloro: Ora chi ha il sacchetto tolgha, anche la tascha, et chi non l’ha, venda la cioppa et conperi el coltello». In questo assai apertamente si manifesta la ‘ntentione di Cristo; e’ non disse ‘conperate o abbiate due coltelli’ — anche disse dodici, conciosiaché a’ dodici discepoli e’ dicessi: «Chi nonn–ha, conperi» — acciò che cascheduno avessi el suo. Et questo ancora diceva significando loro la cattura prossime futura e ‘l dispregio che a loro doveva venire, quasi dicessi: ‘Mentre che ·ffui con voi, eri ricevuti; hor sarete ischaccati. Onde conviene che v’aparecchiate etiandio quelle cose che gà vi vietai, perché ·ccosì la nicistà richiede’. Adunque, se risposta di Piero qui fatta fussi stata sotto quella intentione, gà non sarebbe suta sotto la ‘ntentione di Cristo: della qual cosa Cristo l’arebbe ripreso, come molte volte riprese, quando igniorantemente rispondeva. Ma e’ non fecie questo, anche acconsentì, dicendo «Egli è assai», quasi dicessi: ‘Per la necessità dicho questo; et se non può cascheduno averlo, bastino due’. E ·cche Piero, secondo el suo costume, parlassi alla superficie, lo dichiara la sua subita et inconsiderata presuntione, alla quale

non solo la sincerità della fede lo costrignieva, ma credo la purità et sinplicità naturale. Questa sua presuntione da tutti gli scriptori di Cristo è manifestata. Scrive Matteo che, dimandando Yesù Cristo e discepoli «Chi dite voi ch'io sia?», rispuose Piero innanzi a tutti: «Tu ·sse' Cristo, figliuolo di Dio vivo». Scrive ancora che quando Cristo disse a' discepoli «E' mi bisognia ire in Gerusalem et molte cose patire», Piero lo prese, molto riprendendolo: «Dio ti guardi di questo, Signiore mio; questo non ti averrà». Cristo così lo riprese: «Va adietro, Satanas». Ancora dicie che nel monte della trasfigurazione, nel cospetto di Cristo, di Moysè et d'Elia, et de' due figliuoli di Zebedeo, disse: «Signiore, questa è buona stanza; se ·ttu vuoi, facciamo qui tre tabernacoli, uno a ·tte, uno a Moysè, uno a Elia». Holtre a questo scrive che, essendo e discepoli di notte inn–una navicella, et andando Cristo sopra l'aqua, disse Piero: «Signiore, se ·ttu se' Cristo, fa ch'i' vengha a ·tte sopra l'aqua». Altrove dicie che quando Cristo pronuntiò el futuro schandalo a' sua discepoli, rispuose Piero: «Se tutti contro a ·tte si schandalezeranno, mai non mi scandalezerò io». Di sotto agugnie ancora: «Se bisognerà techo morire, mai ti negherò». Questo ancora testimonia Marcho. Et Lucha iscrive che Piero disse a Cristo alle dette parole de' coltelli: «Signiore, io sono apparecchiato alla prigione et alla morte techo venire». Dice Giovanni di lui che, volendo Cristo lavargli e piedi, disse Piero: «Signiore, lavera' tu a ·mme e piedi?» et di sotto dice: «Non mi laverai e piedi inn–ecterno». Dice ancora lui avere percosso col coltello el servo del ministro, et in questo tutt'e quatro s'accordano. Dicie ancora Govanni lui essere entrato subito, quando venne nel munimento, veggendo l'altro discepolo che stava fermo a l'uscio. Agugnie ancora che, stando Yesù dopo la resuressione nel lito, et udendo Piero ch'egli era el Signore, si misse la vesta, essendo prima ingniudo, et entrò in mare. Finalmente dicie che quando Piero vide Giovanni, disse a Yesù: «Costui che va faccendo?». E' mi giova certamente ta' cose del nostro pastore in laulde della sua purità avere narrate, nelle quali apertamente si conoscie che quando parlava de' due coltelli, con senplice intentione a Cristo rispondeva. Et ancora se ·lle parole di Cristo et Piero s'hanno in fighura a 'ntendere, non si debbono tirare a quel senso che ·ccostoro dicono, ma al senso di quel coltello, del quale Matteo così scrive: «Non vi pensate ch'io sia venuto a mettere in terra pace, ma el coltello. Io sono venuto a ·sseperare lo huomo dal padre suo», *etc.* La qual cosa si fa et inn–opere et in parole: e però diceva Lucha a Teofilo: «Le cose che ·ccomincò Cristo a ·ffare et a 'nsegniare». Tal coltello conperare comandava Cristo, el quale essere quivi dopio ancora Piero rispondeva. Inperò ch'egli erano apparecchiati alle parole et all'opere, per le quali farebbono quello che Cristo diceva sé essere venuto a ·ffare mediante el coltello, come detto abiamo.

Capitolo X.

Che la concessione di Gostantino inperadore a Santo Salvestro papadi Roma et d'altre degnità d'inpero, secondo el detto d'alcuni,non è di ragione; et però el sucessore di Salvestro non le può dare ad altri.

Dicono ancora alcuni che Gostantino, essendo mondato dalla lebra per la intercessione di Salvestro allora pontefice, donò la sedia dello inperio, coè Roma, alla chiesa, con molte altre degnità d'inperio. Onde arguiscono che quelle degnità dipoi nessuno può ricevere se no ·lle riceve dalla chiesa, della quale elle sono, secondo che loro dicono; et di questo bene seguiterebbe, come vogliono, l'una autorità dall'altra dipendere. Posti et soluti gli argumenti, e quali parevano fondati ne' divini sermoni, resta porre et solvere quegli che ·ssi fondano nelle cose fatte da' Romani, et nella humana ragione. De' quali e primo è quello che ·ccosì si propone: 'Quelle chose che ·ssono della chiesa nessuno può di ragione avere se non dalla chiesa' — e questo si concede — ; 'el romano reggimento è della chiesa: adunque non lo può nessuno di ragione avere se non dalla chiesa'. E pruovano la minore per quelle cose che di Ghonstantino di sopra sono dette. Questa minore io niegho loro; et quando e' la pruovano, dico che nulla pruovano, perché Gostantino non poteva alienare lo 'nperio, et la chiesa no 'l poteva ricevere. E quand'eglino si contrapongono pertinacemente, quel che dico così si può mostrare: a nessuno è lecito fare quelle cose per l'uficio a ·ssé diputato, le quali sono contro a esso huficio; inperò che ·ccosì una cosa medesima, in quanto è essa medesima, a ·ssé medesima sarebbe contraria; e questo è inpossibile. Ma contro allo huficio diputato allo inperadore è dividere lo 'nperio, conciosiaché ·llo huficio suo è ad un volere et uno nonvolere tenere la humana generatione subgughata, come nel primo libro dimostramo; et però non è lecito allo inperadore dividere lo 'nperio. Se adunque per Gostantino fussono alcune degnità alienate dallo inperio, come loro dicono, et fussino nella podestà della chiesa pervenute, sarebbesi divisa la vesta inconsutile, coè non
cucita, la quale non ebbono ardire di dividere etian coloro, i quali vulnerorono Cristo, vero Iddio, con la lancia. Holtre a questo, come la chiesa àe el fondamento suo, così ancora lo 'nperio àe el suo. Però che 'l fondamento della chiesa è Cristo; onde lo Appostolo *A' Corinti* così parla: «Nessuno può porre altro fondamento, oltre a quello che è posto, e questo è Cristo Yesù». Lui è la pietra sopra la quale è la chiesa fondata. Ma 'l fondamento dello inperio è la humana ragione. Dico hora che ·ccome alla chiesa non è lecito fare contro al suo fondamento, ma senpre debba sopra esso attenersi (secondo la *Canticha*: «Chi è

costei che sale del diserto, abondante di delitie, che ·ss'accosta sopra al suo diletto?»), così a lo 'nperio non è lecito fare alcuna chosa contro alla humana ragione. Ma e' sarebbe contro alla humana ragione se ·llo 'nperio sé medesimo dissipassi: adunque allo 'nperio non è lecito sé medesimo dissipare. Et perché dividere lo inperio sarebbe distrugere esso inperio, conciosiaché ·llo inperio consiste nella hunità della huniversale monarchia, è manifesto che nonn–è lecito allo inperadore dividere lo 'nperio. E ·cche sia contro alla ragone humana dissipare lo 'nperio di sopra è manifesto. Ancora ogni gurisditione è più anticha che 'l gudicie suo, inperò che 'l gudicie è ordinato a essa gurisditione et non per contrario; ma lo 'nperio è gurisditione che nella anplitudine sua ogni tenporale gurisditione conprende: adunque ella è prima che ·llo inperadore suo gudicie, per la qual chosa lo inperadore a ·ffine d'essa è hordinato, et none essa a ·ffine di lui. Di qui è manifesto che ·llo inperadore non lo può permutare, in quanto egli è inperadore, conciosiaché ·llui riceva da ·llei quello essere che lui è. Ora dico così: o quello era inperadore quando e' dicono che conferì alla chiesa, o no; e se no, è chiaro che non potea conferire lo 'nperio; et se era, conciosiaché ·ttale collatione era diminutione di gurisditione inperiale, in quanto era inperadore fare no 'l poteva. Ancora, se ·llo inperadore potessi seperare alcuna partichula dalla gurisditione inperiale, per la ragione medesima potrebbe l'altro similmente fare. Et conciosiaché ·lla gurisditione tenporale sia finita, et ogni cosa finita per finite divisioni si consumi, per la qual cosa seguiterebbe che ·lla gurisditione prima anicchillare si potrebbe; e questo non è di ragione. Anchora, perché chi conferiscie ha natura d'agiente, et colui a ·cchui è conferito di patiente, come dicie Aristotile nella *Eticha*, a volere che ·ssia lecito el conferire, non si richiede solamente la dispositione di colui che conferisce, ma etian di colui a ·cchui è conferito: perché pare che l'operationi degli agenti sieno nel patiente disposto. Ma la chiesa in nessuno modo era disposta a ricevere cose tenporali, pel precepto ch'espressamente lo vieta, come abiamo da Matteo: «Non vogliate possedere oro né ariento nelle vostre cinture, né pechunia, et non portate la tascha per la via». Et benché per Lucha abiamo alquanta larghezza circha questo precepto quanto ad alcune cose, nientedimeno quanto possessione dell'oro et ariento, non ho potuto trovare licenza data alla chiesa dopo la proibitione predetta. Per la qual cosa, se ·lla chiesa non poteva ricevere, dato che Gostantino avesse potuto fare questo, nientedimeno tale atione non era possibile riceversi, non essendo el patiente disposto. Adunque è manifesto che ·lla chiesa non lo poteva ricevere per modo di posessione, né lui per modo d'alienatione conferire. Nientedimeno poteva lo 'nperadore, inn–aiuto della chiesa, el patrimonio suo et altre cose spendere, stando senpre fermo el superiore dominio, l'unione del quale divisione non patisce. E poteva el vichario di Dio ricevere, non come possessore, ma

·cchome dispensatore de’ frutti a’ poveri di Cristo per la chiesa; la qual cosa sappiamo essere dagli appostoli fatta.
Ancora dicono che Adriano papa chiamò Charlo Magnio in socchorso di sé et della chiesa, per la ‘nguria fatta da’ Longonbardi nel tenpo di Disiderio re loro; et che Charlo da ·llui ricevette la degnità dello inperio, non ostante che Micchael era in Gostantinopoli inperadore. Il perché dicono che tutti que’ che dopo lui furono inperadori romani sono avochati della chiesa, et debbono da ·llei essere chiamati: onde seghuirebbe ancora quella dipendentia la qual vogliono chonchiudere. Et a distrutione di questo dicho che parlano invano, perché l’usurpatione della ragione non fa ragone. Inperò che ·sse la facessi, per modo medesimo l’autorità della chiesa si direbbe dallo inperadore dipendere, dappoi che Ottone inperadore ristituì papa Leone et depuose Benedetto, ed i Sansognia lo mandò inn–exilio.

Capitolo XI.

Che quel detto d'Aristotile nel X della Metafisicha, tutte le coseche ·ssono d'un genere si riducono a uno, che è misura di tuttele cose che ·ssono sotto quello genere' non conchiude chein quanto alle cose tenporali lo 'nperadore sia sotto el papa.

Costoro con ragione così arguiscono. E' pigliano el prencipio del decimo della *Metafisicha*: tutte le cose che ·ssono d'uno genere si riducono a uno, che è misura di tutte le cose che ·ssono sotto quel genere; tutti gli huomini sono d'uno genere: adunque si debbono ridurre a uno, come misura di tutti loro. E ·cconciosiaché 'l sommo pontefice et inperadore sieno huomini, se quella conclusione è vera, bisognia che ·ssi riduchino a uno huomo. E perché 'l papa non si può ridurre ad altri, resta che ·llo inperadore si debba ridurre con tutti gli altri insieme a ·llui, come a misura et reghola: onde seguita quel che vogliono. Per solvere questa ragione, dico che quando e' dicono che 'lle cose che ·ssono d'uno genere, bisognia ridurle a qualche uno di quel genere, el qual è misura inn–esso', dicono el vero. E simile dicono el vero quand'e' dicono che 'tutti gli huomini sono d'uno genere'. Similmente conchiughono el vero quando di qui inferiscono doversi ridurre tutti gli huomini a una misura nel suo genere. Ma quando per questa conclusione inducono del papa et dello inperadore, sono inghannati 'econdo accidente' Et a 'tendere questo, è da ·ssapere che altro è essere huomo et altro è essere papa; altro è essere huomo ed essere inperadore; come altro è essere huomo che essere padre o signiore. L'uomo è quel ch'egli è per la forma sustantiale, per la quale ha spezie et genere, per la quale si ripone nel predicamento della sustantia; el padre è quel ch'egli è per forma accidentale, la quale è relatione per la quale si riducie a certa spetie et a certo genere, e riponsi sotto el predicamento della relatione. Altrimenti tutte le cose si ridurebbono al predicamento della sustantia, conciosiaché nessuno accidente per sé consista, sanza el fondamento della sustantia sostenente: e questo è falso. Adunque essendo el papa et lo inperadore quel che sono per alcune relationi, perché sono tali pel papato et per lo inperio, che ·ssono relationi (et l'altra è sotto l'anbito della paternità, l'altra sotto l'anbito della dominatione); è manifesto che 'l papa et lo inperadore, in quanto sono tali, si debbono riporre sotto el predicamento della relatione, et ridursi a qualche cosa stante inn–essa relatione. E però dico che altra è la misura alla quale si debbono ridurre in quanto sono huomini, edd–altro alla quale in quanto sono papa et inperadore. Inperò in quanto sono huomini, si debbono ridurre a uno hottimo huomo, el quale è di tutti

gli altri misura qualunque costui si sia — purché ·ssia massime huno nel suo genere, secondo el decimo dell'*Eticha*. Ma in quanto sono relativi si debbono ridurre intra loro, se ·ll'uno si sottomette all'altro o ·cchomunichano in ispetie per natura di relatione; o a uno terzo, al quale si riduchino come a ·cchomune hunità. Ma non si può dire che l'uno si sottopongha a l'altro come subalterno, inperò che ·ccosì l'uno dell'altro si predicherebbe, e questo è falso; però che noi non diciamo 'lo 'peradore è papa', né ''l papa è inperadore'. E non si può dire che ·ccomunichino inn–ispetie, perché altra è la difinitione del papa, et altra è dello inperadore, in quanto e' sono tali: adunque si riducono a qualche ·ccosa nella quale e' s'unischino. E però si vuole sapere che quella conperatione che è tra relatione et relatione, quella è tra relativo et relativo. Adunque, se 'l papato et l'inperio, essendo relationi di soprapositione, s'hanno a ridurre a rispetto della soprapositione, dal quale rispetto colle diferentie loro dipendono, papa et inperadore, essendo eglino relativi, si doveranno riducere a qualche uno nel quale si ritruovi esso rispetto di soprapositione sanza altra diferentia. E questo sarà ho esso Iddio, nel quale ogni rispetto universalmente s'uniscie, o una sustantia inferiore, nella quale e rispetto della soprapositione, del senplice rispetto discendente, doventi particulare. E ·ccosì è manifesto come 'l papa et lo 'nperadore, in quanto sono huomini, s'hanno a ridurre a uno; ma in quanto papa et inperadore, ad altro: et questo basti in quanto alla ragione.

Capitolo XII.

Pruova che ·lla autorità dello inperio non è dal papa, per questa ragione: che quello sanza l'essere del quale è altra cosa, quell'altra cosa da questa non dipende.

Posti et rimossi gli errori, a' quali coloro molto s'acchostano che dicono l'autorità del romano inperio dal pontefice romano dipendere, è da ritornare a dimostrare la verità di questa terza quistione, la quale si proponeva da prencipio per dichiararla: la quale verità apparirà sufficientemente se, sotto prefisso prencipio ricercando, la prefata autorità sanza mezo dipendere dalla sommità di tutto l'essere dimosterrò, che è Dio. E questo sarà dimostrato overo se autorità della chiesa sia rimossa da essa — conciosiaché di quella nonn–è alterchatione — o se si mostra chiaramente da Dio sanza mezo dipende. Et che l'autorità della chiesa non sia chagione della inperiale si pruova così: quello, sanza l'essere del quale è altra cosa, quell'altra cosa da questo non dipende; et non esendo la chiesa, overo non dando virtù, lo 'nperio ebbe tutta la virtù sua: adunque la chiesa non è chagione della virtù dello inperio, né della sua autorità, essendo tutt'uno la virtù et l'autorità sua. E questo così si mostra: sia la chiesa A, l'inperio B, l'autorità et virtù d'inperio C. Se, nonn–esendo la A, C è in B, è inpossibile che ·lla A sia chagone dello essere C in B, perch'egli è inpossibile che ·llo effetto preceda la chagione sua nello essere. Ancora, se mentre che ·lla A nulla adopera, C è in B, è necessario che ·lla A non sia chagione dello essere C in B, perch'egli è necessario che alla produtione dello effetto la chagione innanzi adoperi, spetialmente la chagione eficente, della quale al presente parliamo. La maggiore propositione di questa dimostratione è dichiarata ne' termini; la minore è confermata da Cristo et dalla chiesa. Da Cristo, quando naque et quando morì, come di sopra è detto; dalla chiesa, dicente Pagolo negli *Atti degli Appostoli*: «Io sto innanzi al tribunale di Cesare, ove mi conviene essere gudichato». Et poco poi l'angiolo di Dio disse a Pagholo: «Non temere, Pagolo; innanzi a Cesare ti conviene conparire». Et di sotto disse Pagolo a' Gudei ch'erano in Ytalia: «Contradicendomi e Gudei, io sono costretto appellare Cesare, non per acchusare in alcuna cosa la gente mia, ma pe rimuovere l'anima mia dalla morte». E ·sse Cesare nonn–avesse allora avuto autorità di giudicare le cose tenporali, né Cristo arebbe questo persuaso, né ·llo angiolo arebbe quelle parole anunziate, né ·ccolui che diceva «Io disidero di morire et essere con Cristo» arebbe appellato inconveniente gudice. Ancora, se Gostantino nonn avesse avuto autorità, in patrocinio et aiuto della chiesa quelle cose dello inperio che diputò

alla chiesa non arebbe potuto di ragione diputare; e ·ccosì la chiesa ingustamente huserebbe quel dono, conciosiaché Dio voglia l’offerte essere inmaculate, secondo quel detto del *Levitico*: «Ogni hofferta che farete a Dio sarà sanza formento». El quale comandamento, benché paia che sia agli offerenti, nientemeno è ancora a’ recipienti. Stolto è credere che Dio voglia che si riceva quel che vieta dare, massime perché inel medesimo libro si comanda a’ Levitichi: «Non vogliate contaminare l’anime vostre, et non tocchate alcuna di quelle cose, acciò che non siate inmondi». Ma a dire che ·lla chiesa così husi male el patrimonio a ·ssé diputato è molto inconveniente: adunque era falso quello di che questo seguita.

Capitolo XIII.

Pruova che ·lla chiesa non à virtù di dare autorità al prencipe romano, perch'ela non l'ha né da ·dDio, né da ·ssé, né da altro inperadore, né da tutto el consentimento de' mortali, né dalla magore parte.

Oltre a questo, se ·lla chiesa avesse virtù di dare autorità al prencipe romano, o e l'arebbe da Dio, o da ·ssé, o da altro inperadore, o da tutto el consentimento de' mortali, o dalla maggiore parte: non c'è altra via per la quale questa virtù possa essere venuta alla chiesa; ma da nessuno di costoro ha questo: adunque non l'ha inn–alcuno modo. Et che da nessuno di costoro l'abbia, così si mostra. Inperò che ·sse l'avessi da Dio ricevuta, questo sarebbe stato per leggie divina o naturale, perché quello che ·ssi riceve da natura si riceve da Dio, ma non per contrario. Ma non la riceve per naturale leggie, perché la natura non pone leggie se none a' ssuoi effetti, conciosiaché Dio non sia insufficiente al non potere produrre alcuno effetto sanza gli agenti secondi. E non essendo la chiesa effetto di natura, ma di Dio dicente «Sopra questa pietra edificherò la chiesa mia», et altrove «Io ho finita l'opera che ·ttu mi desti a ·ffare», è manifesto che ·lla natura non gli dette la leggie. Né anche per divina leggie, inperò che ogni leggie divina nel grenbo d'i due testamenti si contiene, nel quale grenbo non posso trovare la cura delle cose tenporali al primo o novissimo sacerdotio essere commessa. Ma più tosto truovo e primi sacerdoti da quella per comandamento essere rimossi, come apparisce per le parole di Dio a Moysè; et e sacerdoti hultimi, per le parole di Cristo a' discepoli: la quale non sare' possibile che da loro fusse rimossa se l'autorità del tenporale governo dal sacerdotio dipendessi, conciosiaché nel dare autorità vi sarebbe sollecitudine di provedere, dipoi cautela continova acciò che ·cchi avessi ricevuto autorità dalla retta via non si partissi. Et che non l'abia ricevuta da ·ssé facilmente appariscie. Nessuna cosa è che possa dare quel che nonn–ha; onde qualunque fa alcuna cosa, debbe essere inn–atto tale quale quello che intende fare, secondo la *Metafisicha*. Sicché se ·lla chiesa si dette quella virtù, non l'avea prima ch'ella la desse, e ·ccosì arebbe dato quello ch'ella non aveva: e questo non è possibile. E ·cch'ella non l'abia da 'nperadore ricevuta, di sopra abiàno dichiarato. Chi dirà ch'ella l'abbia avuto dal consenso di tutti gli huomini o della maggiore parte, perché non solo li Africani et Asiani tutti, ma etian la magior parte degli Europi hanno questo inn–odio? Egli è fastidiosa cosa nelle materie manifestissime adurre le pruove.

Capitolo XIV.

Che quello che è contro alla natura d'alcuna cosa, non è nel numero delle sue virtù.

Oltre a questo, quello che è contro alla natura d'alcuna cosa, non è del numero delle sue virtù, conciosiaché le virtù di qualunque cosa conseguitino alla natura sua per aquistare el fine; ma la virtù di dare autorità al regnio della nostra mortalità è contro alla natura della chiesa: adunque non è del numero delle virtù sue. Per dichiaratione della minore è da ·ssapere che ·lla natura della chiesa è la forma della chiesa: inperò che, benché ·lla natura si dicha della materia et della forma, nientedimeno principalmente della forma s'intende, secondo Aristotile nella *Fisicha*. E ·lla forma della chiesa non è altro che la vita di Cristo ne' detti et fatti suoi conpresa. La vita sua fu uno exenpro della chiesa militante, spetialmente de' pastori, massime del sommo pontefice, l'uficio del quale è pascere li agnielli et le pecore. Onde lui in *Giovanni* lascandoci la forma della sua vita, disse: «Dato v'ò lo essenpro, che ·ccome io ho fatto, così e voi facciate». E spetialmente disse a Piero, poiché ·llo huficio del pastore gli ebbe commesso, come in *Giovanni* si leggie: «Piero, seguita me». Ma Cristo in presenza di Pilato questo regnio dineghò, dicendo: «E ·regnio mio nonn–è di questo mondo; se ·regnio mio di questo mondo fussi, e ministri miei conbatterebbono che da' Gudei non fussi preso; ma hora qui non è el regno mio». Non s'intende questo così, che Cristo, che è Dio, non sia di questo regnio signiore, perché dicie el salmo così «D'Iddio è il mare e lui lo fece, le sue mani fondarono la terra»; ma disselo come exenpro della chiesa, che ·ccosì nonne aveva chura di questo regno, in tal modo come se uno subgello d'oro di sé parlando dicesse 'io non sono misura in genere alcuno'; el quale detto non ha luogho in quanto egli è horo, perch'egli è misura del genere de' metalli, ma in quanto egli è un certo segnio che ·ssi può ricevere per inpressione formale. Adunque egli è huficio della chiesa dire et intendere quel medesimo: ma dire ho intendere l'opposito è contrario alla forma, come è manifesto, et alla natura sua, che è quel medesimo. Di qui apparisce che ·lla virtù del dare autorità a questo regnio è contro alla natura della chiesa, perché la contrarietà nella hoppenione et nel detto seghuita della contrarietà ch'è nella cosa detta e hordinata, come 'l vero et el falso dall'essere della cosa ho dal none essere nello 'ntelletto proccede, secondo e *Predicamenti*. Sofficientemente per gli argumenti sopradetti, riducendo quello ch'è oppenione 'ad inconveniente', abiamo provato l'autorità dello inperio dalla chiesa non dipende.

Capitolo XV.

Che ·llo inperadore à rispetto santa mezo a Dio, prencipe dello huniverso.

Benché nel precedente capitolo, riducendo ‘a inconveniente’, abiamo provato l’autorità dello ‘nperio dal pontefice non dipendere, non s’è però interamente mostro essa sanza mezo venire da Dio, se non per conseguenza. Egli è conseguente cosa che ·sse non viene dal vichario di Dio, che vengha sanza mezo da Dio. E però perfettamente dichiarare el proposito, per affermativa dimostratione proveremo che ·llo ‘nperadore ha rispetto sanza mezo a Dio, prencipe dello huniverso. A ‘ntendere questo, si vuole sapere che ·ssolo l’uomo, nell’ordine delle chose, tiene el mezo tra ·lle cose corruttibili et non corruttibili; sicché rettamente l’assimigliano e filosafi allo orizonte, che è el mezo de’ due emisperi. Inperò che ·ssolo huomo si considera secondo l’una et l’altra parte essentiale, coè anima et corpo: secondo el corpo è corruttibile, secondo l’anima non corruttibile. Et bene disse Aristotile di lui nel secondo *Dell’Anima*, secondo ch’egli è incoruttibile, in questo modo: «E questo solo si può seperare, come perpetuo, da corruttibile». Adunque se lo huomo è in mezo tra queste due cose, et hogni mezo tiene la natura degli stremi, è necessario che lo huomo tengha dell’una et dell’altra natura. E per chagione che ogni natura a huno hultimo fine si riducie, bisognia che lo huomo si riducha a due cose, delle quali l’una sia fine dello huomo secondo ch’egli è corruttibile, l’altra fine suo secondo ch’ella è incorruttibile.

Adunque quella providenza che non può errare propuose allo huomo due fini: l’uno la beatitudine di questa vita, che ·cconsiste nelle hoperationi della propria virtù, et pel tereste paradiso si fighura; l’altra la beatitudine di vita etterna, la quale consiste nella fruitione dello aspetto divino, a la quale la propia virtù non può salire, se non è dal divino lume aiutata, la quale pel paradiso celestiale s’intende. A queste due beatitudini, come a diverse concluxioni, bisognia per diversi mezi venire. Inperò che alla prima noi pervegniamo secondo gli ammaestramenti filosophychi, purché quegli seghuitiamo secondo le virtù morali et intellettuali hoperando; alla seconda per gli amaestramenti spirituali, che trascendono la humana ragione, pure che quegli seghuitiamo hoperando secondo le virtù teologiche, fede, speranza et carità. Adunque queste due concrusioni et mezi, benché ci sieno mostri l’una dalla humana ragone, la quale pe’ filosaphy c’è manifesta, l’altra dal Santo Spirito, el quale pe’ profeti et sagri scriptori et per lo etterno figliuolo di Dio, Yesù Cristo, et pe’ sua discepoli la virtù sopranaturale et le cose a ·nnoi necessarie ci rivelò; nientedimeno la humana

cupidità le posporebbe, se gli huomini, come cavalli nella loro bestialità vaghabondi, con freno non fussino rattenuti. Honde e' fu di bisognio allo huomo di due direzioni, secondo due fini: coè del sommo pontefice, el quale secondo le revelationi dirizassi la humana generatione alla felicità spirituale; et dello inperadore, el quale secondo gli amaestramenti filosofichi alla tenporale filicità dirizasse gli huomini. Certamente a questo porto nessuni ho pochi et dificilmente potrebono pervenire, se ·lla generatione humana, sedate et quietate l'onde della cupidità, non si riposassi libera nella tranquilla pacie; questo è quel segnio, al quale massime debba risguardare lo inperadore della terra, principe romano, acciò che in questa abitatione mortale in pacie si viva. E perché la dispositione di questo mondo seghuita la dispositione delle celeste spere, è necessario a questo che gli huniversali amaestramenti della pacificha libertà comodamente a' luoghi et a' tenpi s'adattino, che questo terreno inperadore sia da ·ccholui spirato, el quale presentialmente vede tutta la dispositione de' cieli. Costui è solo quello che ordinò questa, acciò che ·llui, per queste cose provedendo, tutte le cose co' suoi ordini conleghassi. E ·ss'egli è così, solo Iddio eleggie, solo Iddio conferma, non avendo lui supperiore. Onde ancora vedere si può che né questi che ora si dicono, né altri che mai si sieno detti 'elettori', così si debbono chiamare, ma più tosto 'denuntiatori della providentia divina'. Di qui aviene che spesso insieme si discordano quegli, a' quali è data facultà d'annunziare, o perché tutti loro, o perché alcuno di loro, ottenebrati dalla nebbia della cupidità, non discernono la faccia della dispositione divina. Così adunque apparisce che ·lla autorità della tenporale monarchia sanza mezo alcuno inn–esso monarcha discende del Fonte della huniversale autorità: el quale Fonte, nella sommità della senplicità sua unito, in vari rivoli partiscie licore della bontà sua abondante. Gà mi pare assai avere toccho el proposito termino: inperò ch'egli è dichiarata la verità di quella quistione per la quale si cercava se al bene essere del mondo fusse l'uficio del monarcha necessario; et ancora di quella che cercava se 'l populo romano per ragione s'atribuì lo 'nperio; similmente dell'ultima, nella quale si dimandava se ·ll'autorità del monarcha sanza mezo da Dio overo da altri dependa. La verità di questa ultima quistione non si debba così strettamente intendere, che 'l principe romano non sia al pontefice inn–alcuna cosa subgetto, conciosiaché questa mortale felicità alla filicità inmortale sia ordinata. Cesare adunque quella riverenza husi a Piero, la quale el primogenito figliuolo husare inverso el padre debba, acciò che lui, inlustrato dalla lucie della paterna gratia, con più virtù il circulo della terra inlumini, al quale circulo è da ·ccolui solo proposto, el quale è di tutte le cose spirituali et tenporali ghovernatore.

FINIS.

EPISTOLA XIII A CANGRANDE DELLA SCALA

Risalente agli anni tra il 1315 e 1317, questa epistola è l'ultima e la più rilevante delle sole tredici epistole dantesche attualmente conservate; essa contiene la dedica del Paradiso al signore di Verona, nonché importanti indicazioni per la lettura della Commedia: il soggetto (la condizione delle anime dopo la morte), la pluralità dei sensi, il titolo (che deriva dal fatto che inizia in modo aspro e triste e si conclude con il lieto fine), la finalità dell'opera che non è solo speculativa, ma pratica poiché mira a rimuovere i viventi dallo stato di miseria per portarli alla felicità.

La datazione, non certa, è evinta da segnali interni all'epistola: così si è stabilito che il termine post quem è il 1316, data di inizio della stesura del Paradiso, il termine ante quem è invece il 1320, data della sconfitta di Cangrande (nell'epistola definito "victorioso") a Padova. Problematica e non ancora del tutto risolta è la questione dell'attribuzione dell'epistola a Dante: essa scaturisce soprattutto da un grande divario tra lo stile dei primi tredici capitoli e quello dei successivi; così, la prima parte dell'Epistola XIII è quasi unanimemente attribuita a Dante, mentre la seconda è ancora fonte di accese dispute. Sulla base dello studio di indizi e del confronto con altri passi dell'opera dantesca, alcuni critici, come Bruno Nardi, negano l'autenticità, mentre altri, come Giorgio Padoan ed Enzo Cecchini, la confermano.

Dante in Exile by Frederic Leighton

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I.

1. Reverendissimo in Christo patri dominorum suorum carissimo domino Nicholao miseratione celesti Ostiensi et Vallatrensi episcopo, Apostolice Sedis legato, necnon in Tuscia Romaniola et Marchia Tervisina et partibus circum adiacentibus paciario per sacrosanctam Ecclesiam ordinato, devotissimi filii A. capitaneus Consilium et Universitas partis Alborum de Florentia semetipsos devotissime at que promptissime recommendant.

2. Preceptis salutaribus moniti et Apostolica pietate rogati, sacre vocis contextui, quem misistis post cara nobis consilia, respondemus. Et si negligentie sontes aut ignavie censeremur ob iniuriam tarditatis, citra iudicium discretio sancta vestra preponderet; et quantis qualibusque consiliis et responsis, observata sinceritate consortii, nostra Fraternitas decenter procedendo indigeat, et examinatis que tangimus, ubi forte contra debitam celeritatem defecisse despicimur, ut affluentia vestre Benignitatis indulgeat deprecamur.

3. Ceu filii non ingrati litteras igitur pie vestre Paternitatis aspeximus, que totius nostri desiderii personantes exordia, subito mentes nostras tanta letitia perfuderunt, quantam nemo valeret seu verbo seu cogitatione metiri. 4. Nam quam, fere pre desiderio sompniantes, inhiabamus patrie sanitatem, vestrarum litterarum series plusquam semel sub paterna monitione polluxit. 5. Et ad quid aliud in civile bellum corruimus, quid aliud candida nostra signa petebant, et ad quid aliud enses et tela nostra rubebant, nisi ut qui civilia iura temeraria voluptate truncaverant et iugo pie legis colla submitterent et ad pacem patrie cogerentur? 6. Quippe nostre intentionis cuspis legiptima de nervo quem tendebamus prorumpens, quietem solam et libertatem populi fiorentini petebat, petit, atque petet in posterum. 7. Quod si tam gratissimo nobis beneficio vigilatis, et adversarios nostros, prout sancta conamina vestra voluerint, ad sulcos bone civilitatis intenditis remeare, quis vobis dignas grates persolvere attentabit? Nec opis est nostre, pater, nec quicquid florentine gentis reperitur in terris. Sed si qua celo est pietas que talia remuneranda prospiciat, illa vobis premia digna ferat, qui tante urbis misericordiam induistis et ad sedanda civium profana litigia festinatis.

8. Sane, cum per sancte religionis virum fratrem L. civilitatis persuasorem et pacis premoniti atque requisiti sumus instanter pro vobis, quemadmodum et ipse vestre littere continebant, ut ab omni guerrarum insultu cessaremus et usu, et nos ipsos in paternas manus vestras exhiberemus in totum, nos filii devotissimi vobis et pacis amatores et iusti, exuti iam gladiis, arbitrio vestro spontanea et sincera

voluntate subimus, ceu relatu prefati vestri nuntii fratris L. narrabitur, et per publica instrumenta solempniter celebrata liquebit.

9. Idcirco pietati clementissime vestre filiali voce affectuosissime supplicamus quatenus illam diu exagitatam Florentiam sopore tranquillitatis et pacis irrigare velitis, eiusque semper populum defensantes nos et qui nostri sunt iuris, ut pius pater, commendatos habere; qui velut a patrie caritate nunquam destitimus, sic de preceptorum vestrorum limitibus nunquam esorbitare intendimus, sed semper tam debite quam devote quibuscunque vestris obedire mandatis.

II.

[Hanc epistolam scripsit Dantes Alagherii Oberto et Guidoni comitibus de Romena post mortem Alexandri comitis de Romena patrui eorum condolens illis de obitu suo]

1. Patruus vester Alexander, comes illustris, qui diebus proximis celestem unde venerat secundum spiritum remeavit ad patriam, dominus meus erat et memoria eius usque quo sub tempore vivam dominabitur michi, quando magnificentia sua, que super astra nunc affluenter dignis premis muneratur, me sibi ab annosis temporibus sponte sua fecit esse subiectum. Hec equidem, cunctis aliis virtutibus comitata in illo, suum nomen pre titulis Ytalorum ereum illustrabat. 2. Et quid aliud heroica sua signa dicebant, nisi “scuticam vitiorum fugatricem ostendimus”? Argenteas etenim scuticas in purpureo deferebat extrinsecus, et intrinsecus mentem in amore virtutum vitia repellentem. 3. Doleat ergo, doleat progenies maxima Tuscanorum, que tanto viro fulgebat, et doleant omnes amici eius et subditi, quorum spem mors crudeliter verberavit; inter quos ultimos me miserum dolere oportet, qui a patria pulsus et exul inmeritus infortunia mea rependens continuo cara spe memet consolabar in illo.

4. Sed quanquam, sensualibus amissis, doloris amaritudo incumbat, si considerentur intellectualia que supersunt, sane mentis oculis lux dulcis consolationis exoritur. 5. Nam qui virtutem honorabat in terris, nunc a Virtutibus honoratur in celis; et qui Romane aule palatinus erat in Tuscia, nuac regie sempiteme aulicus preelectus in superna Ierusalem cum beatorum principibus gloriatur. 6. Quapropter, carissimi domini mei, supplici exhortatione vos deprecor quatenus modice dolere velitis et sensualia postergare, nisi prout vobis exemplaria esse possunt; et quemadmodum ipse iustissimus bonorum sibi vos instituit in heredes, sic ipsi vos, tanquam proximiores ad illum, mores eius egregios induatis.

7. Ego autem, preter hec, me vestrum vestre discretioni excuso de absentia lacrimosis exequiis; quia nec negligentia neve ingratitudo me tenuit, sed inopina paupertas quam fecit exilium. 8. Hec etenim, velut effera persecutrix, equis armisque vacantem iam sue captivitatis me detrusit in antrum, et nitentem cunctis exsurgere viribus, hucusque prevalens, impia retinere molitur.

III.

1. Exulanti Pistoriensi Florentinus exul inmeritus per tempora diuturna salutem et perpetue caritatis ardorem.

2. Eructuavit incendium tue dilectionis verbum confidentie vehementis ad me, in quo consuluisti, carissime, utrum de passione in passionem possit anima transformari: de passione in passionem dico secundum eandem potentiam et obiecta diversa numero sed non specie; quod quamvis ex ore tuo iustius prodire debuerat, nichilominus me illius auctorem facere voluisti, ut in declaratione rei nimium dubitate titulum mei nominis ampliares. 3. Hoc etenim, cum cognitum, quam acceptum quamque gratum extiterit, absque importuna diminutione verba non caperent: ideo, causa conticentie huius inspecta, ipse quod non exprimitur metiaris.

4. Redditur, ecce, sermo Calliopeus inferius, quo sententialiter canitur, quanquam transumptive more poetico signetur intentum, amorem huius posse torpescere atque denique interire, nec non huius, quod corruptio unius generatio sit alterius, in anima reformari.

5. Et fides huius, quanquam sit ab experientia persuasum, ratione potest et auctoritate muniri. Omnis namque potentia que post corruptionem unius actus non deperit, naturaliter reservatur in alium: ergo potentie sensitive, manente organo, per corruptionem unius actus non depereunt, et naturaliter reservantur in alium; cum igitur potentia concupiscibilis, que sedes amoris est, sit potentia sensitiva, manifestum est quod post corruptionem unius passionis qua in actum reducitur, in alium reservatur. 6. Maior et minor propositio sillogismi, quarum facilis patet introitus, tue diligentie relinquantur probande.

7. Auctoritatem vero Nasonis, quarto De Rerum Transformatione, que directe atque ad litteram propositum respicit, superest ut intueare; scilicet ubi ait, et quidem in fabula trium sororum contemtricium in semine Semeles, ad Solem loquens, qui nymphis aliis derelictis atque neglectis in quas prius exarserat, noviter Leucothoen diligebat: “Quid nunc, Yperione nate”, et reliqua.

8. Sub hoc, frater carissime, ad prudentiam, qua contra Rhamnusie spicula sis patiens, te exhortor. Perlege, deprecor, Fortuitorum Remedia, que ab inclitissimo phylosophorum Seneca nobis velut a patre filiis ministrantur, et illud de memoria sane tua non defluat: “Si de mundo fuissetis, mundus quod suum erat diligeret”.

[Seguiva il sonetto *Io sono stato con Amore insieme*]

IV.

[Scribit Dantes domino Moroello marchioni Malaspine]

1. Ne lateant dominum vincula servi sui, quam affectus gratuitas dominantis, et ne alia relata pro aliis, que falsarum oppinionum seminaria frequentius esse solent, negligentem predicent carceratum, ad conspectum Magnificentie vestre presentis oraculi seriem placuit destinare.

2. Igitur michi a limine suspirate postea curie separato, in qua, velut sepe sub admiratione vidistis, fas fuit sequi libertatis officia, cum primum pedes iuxta Sarni fluenta securus et incautus defigerem, subito heu! mulier, ceu fuigur descendens, apparuit, nescio quomodo, meis auspitiis undique moribus et forma conformis. 3. O quam in eius apparitione obstupui! Sed stupor subsequentis tonitrui terrore cessavit. Nam sicut diurnis coruscationibus illico succedunt tonitrua, sic inspecta fiamma pulcritudinis huius Amor terribilis et imperiosus me tenuit, atque hic ferox, tanquam dominus pulsus a patria post longum exilium sola in sua repatrians, quicquid eius contrarium fuerat intra me, vel occidit vel expulit vel ligavit. 4. Occidit ergo propositum illud laudabile quo a mulieribus suisque cantibus abstinebam; ac meditationes assiduas, quibus tam celestia quam terrestria intuebar, quasi suspectas, impie relegavit; et denique, ne contra se amplius anima rebellaret, liberum meum ligavit arbitrium, ut non quo ego, sed quo ille vult, me verti oporteat. 5. Regnat itaque Amor in me, nulla refragante virtute; qualiterque me regat, inferius extra sinum presentium requiratis.

[Seguiva la canzone *Amor, da che convien pur ch’io mi doglia*]

V.

1. Universis et singulis Ytalie Regibus et Senatoribus alme Urbis nec non Ducibus Marchionibus Comitibus atque Populis, humilis ytalus Dantes Alagherii fiorentinus et exul inmeritus orat pacem.

2. “Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile”, quo signa surgunt consolationis et pacis. Nam dies nova splendescit ab ortu auroram demonstrans, que iam tenebras diuturne calamitatis attenuat iamque aure orientales crebrescunt; rutilat celum in labiis suis, et auspitia gentium blanda serenitate confortat. 3. Et nos gaudium expectatum videbimus, qui diu pernoctitavimus in deserto, quoniam Titan exorietur pacificus, et iustitia, sine sole quasi eliotropium hebetata, cum primum iubar ille vibraverit, revirescet. Saturabuntur omnes qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam in lumine radiorum eius, et confundentur qui diligunt iniquitatem a facie coruscantis. 4. Arrexit namque aures misericordes Leo fortis de tribu Iuda; atque ullulatum universalis captivitatis miserans, Moysen alium suscitavit qui de gravaminibus Egiptiorum populum suum eripiet, ad terram lacte ac melle manantem perducens.

5. Letare iam nunc miseranda Ytalia etiam Saracenis, que statim invidiosa per orbem videberis, quia sponsus tuus, mundi solatium et gloria plebis tue, clementissimus Henricus, divus et Augustus et Cesar, ad nuptias properat. 6. Exsicca lacrimas et meroris vestigia dele, pulcerrima, nam prope est qui liberabit te de carcere impiorum; qui percutiens malignantes in ore gladii perdet eos, et vineam suam aliis locabit agricolis qui fructum iustitie reddant in tempore messis.

7. Sed an non miserebitur cuiquam? Ymo ignoscet omnibus misericordiam implorantibus, cum sit Cesar et maiestas eius de Fonte defluat pietatis. 8. Huius iudicium omnem severitatem abhorret, et semper citra medium plectens, ultra medium premiando se figit. 9. Anne propterea nequam hominum applaudet audacias, et initis presumptionum pocula propinabit? 10. Absit, quoniam Augustus est. Et si Augustus, nonne relapsorum facinora vindicabit, et usque in Thessaliam persequetur, Thessaliam, inquam, finalis deletionis?

11. Pone, sanguis Longobardorum, coadductam barbariem; et si quid de Troyanorum Latinorumque semine superest, illli cede, ne cum sublimis aquila fulguris instar descendens adfuerit, abiectos videat pullos eius, et prolis proprie locum corvulis occupatum. 12. Eya, facite, Scandinavie soboles, ut cuius merito trepidatis adventam, quod ex vobis est presentiam sitiatis. 13. Nec seducat alludens cupiditas, more Sirenum nescio qua dulcedine vigiliam rationis mortificans. 14. Preoccupetis faciem eius in confessione subiectionis, et in

psalterio penitentie iubiletis, considerantes quia “potestati resistens Dei ordinationi resistit”; et qui divine ordinationi repugnat, voluntati omnipotentie coequali recalcitrat; et “durum est contra stimulum calcitrare”.

15. Vos autem qui lugetis oppressi “animum sublevate, quoniam prope est vestra salus”. Assumite rastrum bone humilitatis, atque glebis exuste animositatis occatis, agellum sternite mentis vestre, ne forte celestis imber, sementem vestram ante iactum preveniens, in vacuum de altissimo cadat. 16. Non resiliat gratia Dei ex vobis tanquam ros quotidianus ex lapide; sed velut fecunda vallis concipite ac viride germinetis, viride dico fructiferum vere pacis; qua quidem viriditate vestra terra vernante, novus agricola Romanorum consilii sui boves ad aratrum affectuosius et confidentius coniugabit. 17. Parcite, parcite iam ex nunc, o carissimi, qui mecum iniuriam passi estis, ut Hectoreus pastor vos oves de ovili suo cognoscat; cui etsi animadversio temporalis divinitus est indulta, tamen, ut eius bonitatem redoleat a quo velut a puncto biffurcatur Petri Cesarisque potestas, voluptuose familiam suam corrigit, sed ei voluptuosius miseretur.

18. Itaque, si culpa vetus non obest, que plerunque supinatur ut coluber et vertitur in se ipsam, hinc utrique potestis advertere, pacem unicuique preparari, et insperate letitie iam primitias degustare. 19. Evigilate igitur omnes et assurgite regi vestro, incole Latiales, non solum sibi ad imperium, sed, ut liberi, ad regimen reservati.

20. Nec tantum ut assurgatis exhortor, sed ut illius obstupescatis aspectum. Qui bibitis fluenta eius eiusque maria navigatis; qui calcatis arenas littorum et Alpium summitates, que sue sunt; qui publicis quibuscunque gaudetis, et res privatas vinculo sue legis, non aliter, possidetis; nolite, velut ignari, decipere vosmetipsos, tanquam sompniantes, in cordibus et dicentes: “Dominum non habemus”. 21. Hortus enim eius et lacus est quod celum circuit; nam “Dei est mare, et ipse fecit illud, et aridam fundaverunt manus eius”. 22. Unde Deum romanum Principem predestinasse relucet in miris effectibus; et verbo Verbi confermasse posterius profitetur Ecclesia.

23. Nempe si “a creatura mundi invisibilia Dei, per ea que facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur”, et si ex notioribus nobis innotiora; si simpliciter interest humane apprehensioni ut per motum celi Motorem intelligamus et eius velle; facile predestinatio hec etiam leviter intuentibus innotescet. 24. Nam si a prima scintillula huius ignis revolvamus preterita, ex quo scilicet Argis hospitalitas est a Frigibus denegata, et usque ad Octaviani triumphos mundi gesta revisere vacet; nonnulla eorum videbimus humane virtutis omnino culmina transcendisse, et Deum per homines, tanquam per celos novos, aliquid operatum

fuisse. 25. Non etenim semper nos agimus, quin interdum utensilia Dei sumus; ac voluntates humane, quibus inest ex natura libertas, etiam inferioris affectus inmunes quandoque aguntur, et obnoxie voluntati eterne sepe illli ancillantur ignare.

26. Et si hec, que uti principia sunt, ad probandum quod queritur non sufficiunt, quis non ab illata conclusione per talia precedente mecum oppinari cogetur, pace videlicet annorum duodecim orbem totaliter amplexata, que sui sillogizantis faciem Dei filium, sicuti opere patrato, ostendit? 27. Et hic, cum ad revelationem Spiritus, homo factus, evangelizaret in terris, quasi dirimens duo regna, sibi et Cesari universa distribuens, alterutri iussit reddi que sua sunt.

28. Quod si pertinax animus poscit ulterius, nondum annuens veritati, verba Christi examinet etiam iam ligati; cui cum potestatem suam Pilatus obiceret, Lux nostra de sursum esse asseruit quod ille iactabat qui Cesaris ibi auctoritate vicaria gerebat officium. 29. “Non igitur ambuletis sicut et gentes ambulant in vanitate sensus” tenebris obscurati; sed aperite oculos mentis vestre, ac videte quoniam regem nobis celi ac terre Dominus ordinavit. 30. Hic est quem Petrus, Dei vicarius, honorificare nos monet; quem Clemens, nunc Petri successor luce Apostolice benedictionis illuminat; ut ubi radius spiritualis non sufficit, ibi splendor minoris luminaris illustret.

VI.

1. Dantes Alagherii florentinus et exul inmeritus scelestissimis Florentinis intrinsecis.
2. Eterni pia providentia Regis, qui dum celestia sua bonitate perpetuat, infera nostra despiciendo non deserit, sacrosancto Romanorum Imperio res humanas disposuit gubernandas, ut sub tanti serenitate presidii genus mortale quiesceret, et ubique, natura poscente, civiliter degeretur. 3. Hoc etsi divinis comprobatur elogiis, hoc etsi solius podio rationis innixa contestatur antiquitas, non leviter tamen veritati applaudit quod, solio augustali vacante, totus orbis exorbitat, quod nauclerus et remiges in navicula Petri dormitant, et quod Ytalia misera, sola, privatis arbitriis derelicta omnique publico moderamine destituta, quanta ventorum fluentorumve concussione feratur verba non caperent, sed et vix Ytali infelices lacrimis metiuntur. 4. Igitur in hanc Dei manifestissimam voluntatem quicunque temere presumendo tumescunt, si gladius Eius qui dicit “Mea est ultio” de celo non cecidit, ex nunc severi iudicis adventante iudicio pallore notentur.

5. Vos autem divina iura et humana transgredientes, quos dira cupiditatis ingluvies paratos in omne nefas illexit, nonne terror secunde mortis exagitat, ex quo, primi et soli iugum libertatis horrentes, in romani Principis, mundi regis et Dei ministri, gloriam fremuistis, atque iure prescriptionis utentes, debite subiectionis officium denegando, in rebellionis vesaniam maluistis insurgere? 6. An ignoratis, amentes et discoli, publica iura cum sola temporis terminatione finiri, et nullius prescriptionis calculo fore obnoxia? 7. Nempe legum sanctiones alme declarant, et humana ratio percontando decernit, publica rerum dominia, quantalibet diuturnitate neglecta, nunquam posse vanescere vel abstenuata conquiri; nam quod ad omnium cedit utilitatem, sine omnium detrimento interire non potest, vel etiam infirmari; et hoc Deus et natura non vult, et mortalium penitus abhorreret adsensus. 8. Quid, fatua tali oppinione summota, tanquam alteri Babilonii, pium deserentes imperium nova regna temptatis, ut alia sit Florentina civilitas, alia sit Romana? Cur apostolice monarchie similiter invidere non libet, ut si Delia geminatur in celo, geminetur et Delius? 9. Atqui si male ausa rependere vobis terrori non est, territet saltim obstinata precordia quod non modo sapientia, sed initium eius ad penam culpe vobis ablatum est. 10. Nulla etenim conditio delinquentis formidolosior, quam impudenter et sine Dei timore quicquid libet agentis. Hac nimirum persepe animadversione percutitur impius, ut moriens obliviscatur sui qui dum viveret oblitus est Dei.

11. Sin prorsus arrogantia vestra insolens adeo roris altissimi, ceu cacumina Gelboe, vos fecit exsortes, ut Senatus eterni consulto restitisse timori non fuerit, nec etiam non timuisse timetis; nunquid timor ille perniciosus, humanus videlicet atque mundanus, abesse poterit, superbissimi vestri sanguinis vestreque multum lacrimande rapine inevitabili naufragio properante? 12. An septi vallo ridiculo cuiquam defensioni confiditis? O male concordes! o mira cupidine obcecati! Quid vallo sepsisse, quid propugnaculis et pinnis urbem armasse iuvabit, cum advolaverit aquila in auro terribilis, que nunc Pirenen, nunc Caucason, nunc Athlanta supervolans, militie celi magis confortata sufflamine, vasta maria quondam transvolando despexit? quid, cum adfore stupescetis, miserrimi hominum, delirantis Hesperie domitorem? 13. Non equidem spes, quam frustra sine more fovetis, reluctantia ista iuvabitur, sed hac obice iusti regis adventus inflammabitur amplius, ac, indignata, misericordia semper concomitans eius exercitum avolabit; et quo false libertatis trabeam tueri existimatis, eo vere servitutis in ergastula concidetis. 14. Miro namque Dei iudicio quandoque agi credendum est, ut unde digna supplicia impius declinare arbitratur, inde in ea gravius precipitetur; et qui divine voluntati reluctatus est et sciens et volens, eidem militet nesciens atque nolens.

15. Videbitis edificia vestra non necessitati prudenter instructa sed delitiis inconsulte mutata, que Pergama rediviva non cingunt, tam ariete ruere, tristes, quam igne cremari. 16. Videbitis plebem circunquaque furentem nunc in contraria, pro et contra, deinde in idem adversus vos horrenda clamantem, quoniam simul et ieiuna et timida nescit esse. Templa quoque spoliata, cotidie matronarum frequentata concursu, parvulosque admirantes et inscios peccata patrum luere destinatos videre pigebit. 17. Et si presaga mens mea non fallitur, sic signis veridicis sicut inexpugnabilibus argumentis instructa prenuntians, urbem diutino merore confectam in manus alienorum tradi finaliter, plurima vestri parte seu nece seu captivitate deperdita, perpessuri exilium pauci cum fletu cernetis. 18. Utque breviter colligam, quas tulit calamitates illa civitas gloriosa in fide pro libertate Saguntum, ignominiose vos eas in perfidia pro servitute subire necesse est.

19. Nec ab inopina Parmensium fortuna sumatis audaciam, qui malesuada fame urgente murmurantes invicem “prius moriamur et in media arma ruamus”, in castra Cesaris, absente Cesare, proruperunt; nam et hii, quanquam de Victoria victoriam sint adepti, nichilominus ibi sunt de dolore dolorem memorabiliter consecuti. 20. Sed recensete fulmina Federici prioris, et Mediolanum consulite pariter et Spoletum; quoniam ipsorum perversione simul et evasione discussa viscera vestra nimium dilatata frigescent, et corda vestra nimium ferventia contrahentur. 21. A, Tuscorum vanissimi, tam natura quam vitio insensati! Quam

in noctis tenebris malesane mentis pedes oberrent *** ante oculos pennatorum, nec perpenditis nec figuratis ignari. Vident namque vos pennati et inmaculati in via, quasi stantes in limine carceris, et miserantem quempiam, ne forte vos liberet captivatos et in compedibus astrictos et manicis, propulsantes. 22. Nec advertitis dominantem cupidinem, quia ceci estis, venenoso susurrio blandientem, minis frustatoriis cohibentem, nec non captivantem vos in lege peccati, ac sacratissimis legibus que iustitie naturalis imitantur ymaginem, parere vetantem; observantia quarum, si leta, si libera, non tantum non servitus esse probatur, quin ymo perspicaciter intuenti liquet ut est ipsa summa libertas. 23. Nam quid aliud hec nisi liber cursus voluntatis in actum quem suis leges mansuetis expediunt? Itaque solis existentibus liberis qui volontarie legi obediunt, quos vos esse censebitis qui, dum pretenditis libertatis affectum, contra leges universas in legum principem conspiratis?

24. O miserrima Fesulanorum propago, et iterum iam punita barbaries! An parum timoris prelibata incutiunt? Omnino vos tremere arbitror vigilantes, quanquam spem simuletis in facie verboque mendaci, atque in somniis expergisci plerunque, sive pavescentes infusa presagia, sive diurna consila recolentes. 25. Verum si merito trepidantes insanisse penitet non dolentes, ut in amaritudinem penitentie metus dolorisque rivuli confluant, vestris animis infigenda supersunt, quod Romane rei baiulus hic divus et triumphator Henricus, non sua privata sed publica mundi commoda sitiens, ardua queque pro nobis aggressus est sua sponte penas nostras participans, tanquam ad ipsum, post Christum, digitum prophetie propheta direxerit Ysaias, cum, spiritu Dei revelante, predixit: “Vere languores nostros ipse tulit et dolores nostros ipse portavit”. 26. Igitur tempus amarissime penitendi vos temere presumptorum, si dissimulare non vultis, adesse conspicitis. Et sera penitentia hoc a modo venie genitiva non erit, quin potius tempestive animadversionis exordium. Est enim: quoniam peccator percutitur, ut ‘sine retractatione moriatur’.

27. Scriptum pridie Kalendas Apriles in finibus Tuscie sub fontem Sarni, faustissimi cursus Henrici Cesaris ad Ytaliam anno primo.

VII.

1. Sanctissimo gloriosissimo atque felicissimo triumphatori et domino singulari domino Henrico divina providentia Romanorum Regi et semper Augusto, devotissimi sui Dantes Alagherii Florentinus et exul inmeritus ac universaliter omnes Tusci qui pacem desiderant, terre osculum ante pedes.

2. Inmensa Dei dilectione restante, relicta nobis est pacis hereditas, ut in sua mira dulcedine militie nostre dura mitescerent, et in usu eius patrie triumphantis gaudia mereremur. 3. At livor antiqui et implacabilis hostis, humane prosperitati semper et latenter insidians, nonnullos exheredando volentes, ob tutoris absentiam nos alios impius denudavit invitos. 4. Hinc diu super flumina confusionis deflevimus, et patrocinia iusti regis incessanter implorabamus, qui satellitium sevi tyranni disperderet et nos in nostra iustitia reformaret. 5. Cumque tu, Cesaris et Augusti successor, Apennini iuga transiliens veneranda signa Tarpeia retulisti, protinus longa substiterunt suspiria lacrimarumque diluvia desierunt; et, ceu Titan preoptatus exoriens, nova spes Latio seculi melioris effulsit. 6. Tunc plerique vota sua prevenientes in iubilo tam Saturnia regna quam Virginem redeuntem cum Marone cantabant.

7. Verum quia sol noster, sive desiderii fervor hoc submoneat sive facies veritatis, aut morari iam creditur aut retrocedere supputatur, quasi Iosue denuo vel Amos filius imperaret, incertitudine dubitare compellimur et in vocem Precursoris irrompere sic: “Tu es qui venturus es, an alium expectamus?”. 8. Et quamvis longa sitis in dubium que sunt certa propter esse propinqua, ut adsolet, furibunda deflectat, nichilominus in te credimus et speramus, asseverantes te Dei ministrum et Ecclesie filium et Romane glorie promotorem. 9. Nam et ego qui scribo tam pro me quam pro aliis, velut decet imperatoriam maiestatem benignissimum vidi et clementissimum te audivi, cum pedes tuos manus mee tractarunt et labia mea debitum persolverunt. 10. Tunc exultavit in te spiritus meus, cum tacitus dixi mecum: “Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi”.

11. Sed quid tam sera moretur segnities admiramur, quando iamdudum in valle victor Eridani non secus Tusciam derelinquis, pretermittis et negligis, quam si iura tutanda Imperii circumscribi Ligurum finibus arbitreris; non prorsus, ut suspicamur, advertens, quoniam Romanorum gloriosa potestas nec metis Ytalie nec tricornis Europe margine coarctatur. 12. Nam etsi vim passa in angustum gubernacula sua contraxerit, undique tamen de inviolabili iure fluctus Amphitritis attingens vix ab inutili unda Oceani se circumcingi dignatur. 13. Scriptum etenim nobis est:

Nascetur pulcra Troyanus origine Cesar,

imperium Occeano, famam qui terminet astris.

14. Et cum universaliter orbem describi edixisset Augustus, ut bos noster evangelizans accensus Ignis eterni fiamma remugit, si non de iustissimi principatus aula prodiisset edictum, unigenitus Dei Filius homo factus ad profitendum secundum naturam assumptam edicto se subditum, nequaquam tunc nasci de Virgine voluisset; non enim suasisset iniustum, quem “omnem iustitiam implere” decebat.

15. Pudeat itaque in angustissima mundi area irretiri tam diu quem mundus omnis expectat; et ab Augusti circumspectione non defluat quod Tuscana tyrannis in dilationis fiducia confortatur, et cotidie malignantium cohortando superbiam vires novas accumulat, temeritatem temeritati adiciens. 16. Intonet iterum vox illa Curionis in Cesarem:

> Dum trepidant nullo firmate robore partes,
> tolle moras; semper nocuit differre paratis:
> par labor atque metus pretio maiore petuntur.
> 17. Intonet illa vox increpitantis Anubis iterum in Eneam:
> Si te nulla movet tantarum gloria rerum,
> nec super ipse tua moliris laude laborem,
> Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli,
> respice, cui regnum Ytalie Romanaque tellus
> debentur.

18. Iohannes namque, regius primogenitus tuus et rex, quem, post diei orientis occasum, mundi successiva posteritas prestolatur, nobis est alter Ascanius, qui vestigia magni genitoris observans, in Turnos ubique sicut leo deseviet et in Latinos velut agnus mitescet. 19. Precaveant sacratissimi regis alta consilia, ne celeste iudicium Samuelis illa verba reasperent: “Nonne cum parvulus esses in oculis tuis, caput in tribubus Israel factus es, unxitque te Dominus in regem super Israel, et misit te Deus in via et ait: Vade et interfice peccatores Amalech?”. Nam et tu in regem sacratus es ut Amalech percutias et Agag non parcas, atque ulciscaris Illum qui misit te de gente brutali et de festina sua sollempnitate; que quidem et Amalech et Agag sonare dicuntur.

20. Tu Mediolani tam vernando quam hiemando moraris et hydram pestiferam per capitum amputationem reris extinguere? Quod si magnalia gloriosi Alcide recensuisses, te ut illum falli cognosceres, cui pestilens animal, capite repullulante multiplici, per damnum crescebat, donec instanter magnanimus vite principium impetivit. 21. Non etenim ad arbores extirpandas

valet ipsa ramorum incisio quin iterum multiplicius virulenter ramificent, quousque radices incolumes fuerint ut prebeant alimentum. 22. Quid, preses unice mundi, peregisse preconicis cum cervicem Cremone deflexeris contumacis? nonne tunc vel Brixie vel Papie rabies inopina turgescet? Ymo, que cum etiam flagellata resederit, mox alia Vercellis vel Pergami vel alibi returgebit, donec huius scatescentie causa radicalis tollatur, et radice tanti erroris avulsa, cum trunco rami pungitivi arescant.

23. An ignoras, excellentissime principum, nec de specula summe celsitudinis deprehendis ubi vulpecula fetoris istius, venantium secura, recumbat? Quippe nec Pado precipiti, nec Tiberi tuo criminosa potatur, verum Sarni fluenta torrentis adhuc rictus eius inficiunt, et Florentia, forte nescis?, dira hec pernicies nuncupatar. 24. Hec est vipera versa in viscera genitricis; hec est languida pecus gregem domini sui sua contagione commaculans; hec Myrrha scelestis et impia in Cinyre patris amplexus exestuans; hec Amata illa impatiens, que, repulso fatali connubio, quem fata negabant generum sibi adscire non timuit, sed in bella furialiter provocavit, et demum, male ausa luendo, laqueo se suspendit. 25. Vere matrem viperea feritate dilaniare contendit, dum contra Romam cornua rebellionis exacuit, que ad ymaginem suam atque similitudinem fecit illam. 26. Vere fumos, evaporante sanie, vitiantes exhalat, et inde vicine pecudes et inscie contabescunt, dum falsis illiciendo blanditiis et figmentis aggregat sibi finitimos et infatuat aggregatos. Vere in paternos ardet ipsa concubitus, dum improba procacitate conatur summi Pontificis, qui pater est patrum, adversum te violare assensum. 27. Vere Dei ordinationi resistit, proprie voluntatis ydolum venerando, dum regem aspernata legiptimum non erubescit insana regi non suo iura non sua pro male agendi potestate pacisci. Sed attendat ad laqueum mulier furiata quo se innectit. 28. Nam sepe quis in reprobum sensum traditur, ut traditus faciat ea que non conveniunt; que quamvis iniusta sint opera, iusta tamen supplicia esse noscuntur.

29. Eia itaque, rumpe moras, proles altera Isai, sume tibi fiduciam de oculis Domini Dei Sabaoth coram quo agis, et Goliam hunc in funda sapientie tue atque in lapide virium tuarum prosterne; quoniam in eius occasu nox et umbra timoris castra Philistinorum operiet: fugient Philistei et liberabitur Israel. 30. Tunc hereditas nostra, quam sine intermissione deflemus ablatam, nobis erit in integrum restituta; ac quemadmodum, sacrosancte Ierusalem memores, exules in Babilone gemiscimus, ita tunc cives et respirantes in pace, confusionis miserias in gaudio recolemus.

31. Scriptum in Tuscia sub fonte Sarni xv Kalendas Maias, divi Henrici faustissimi cursus ad Ytaliam anno primo.

VIII.

1. Gloriosissime atque clementissime domine domine Margarite divina providentia Romanorum regine et semper Auguste, G. de Batifolle Dei et adiuvalis Magnificentie gratia comitissa in Tuscia palatina, tam debite quam devote subiectionis officium ante pedes.

2. Gratissima regie Benignitatis epistola et meis oculis visa letanter et manibus fuit assumpta reverenter, ut decuit. Cumque significata per illam mentis aciem penetrando dulcescerent, adeo spiritus lectitantis fervore devotionis incaluit, ut nunquam possint superare oblivia nec memoria sine gaudio memorare. 3. Nam quanti vel qualis ego, ut ad enarrandum michi de sospitate consortis et sua, utinam diuturna!, coniunx fortissima Cesaris condescendat? Quippe tanti pondus honoris neque merita gratulantis neque dignitas postulabat; sed nec etiam inclinari humanorum graduum dedecuit apicem, unde, velut a vivo fonte, sancte civilitatis exempla debent inferioribus emanare.

4. Dignas itaque persolvere grates non opis est hominis; verum ab homine alienum esse non reor pro insufficiente supplemento Deum exorare quandoque. 5. Nunc ideo regni siderii iustis precibus atque piis aula pulsetur, et impetret supplicantis affectus quatenus mundi gubernator eternus condescensui tanto premia coequata retribuat, et ad auspitia Cesaris et Auguste dexteram gratie coadiutricis extendat; ut qui romani principatus imperio barbaras nationes et cives in mortalium tutamenta subegit, delirantis evi familiam sub triumphis et gloria sui Henrici reformet in melius.

IX.

1. Serenissime atque piissime domine domine Margarite celestis miserationis intuitu Romanorum regine et semper Auguste, devotissima sua G. de Batifolle Dei et Imperii gratia largiente comitissa in Tuscia palatina, flexis humiliter genibus reverentie debitum exhibet.

2. Regalis epistole documenta gratuita ea qua potui venerazione recepi, intellexi devote. Sed cum de prosperitate successuum vestri felicissimi cursus familiariter intimata concepi, quanto libens animus concipientis arriserit, placet potius commendare silentio tanquam nuntio meliori; non enim verba significando sufficiunt ubi mens ipsa quasi debria superatur. 3. Itaque suppleat regie Celsitudinis apprehensio que scribentis humilitas esplicare non potest.

4. At quamvis insinuata per litteras ineffabiliter grata fuerint et iocunda, spes amplior tamen et letandi causas accumulat et simul vota iusta confectat. Spero equidem, de celesti previsione confidens quam nunquam falli vel prepediri posse non dubito et que humane civilitati de Principe singolari providit, quod exordia vestri regni felicia semper in melius prosperata procedent. 5. Sic igitur in presentibus et futuris exultans, ad Auguste clementiam sine ulla hesitatione recurro, et suppliciter tempestiva deposco quatenus me sub umbra tutissima vestri Culminis taliter collocare dignemini, ut cuiusque sinistrationis ab estu sim semper et videar esse secura.

X.

1. Illustrissime atque piissime domine domine Margarite divina providentia Romanorum regine et semper Auguste, fidelissima sua G. de Batifolle Dei et imperialis indulgentie gratia comitissa in Tuscia palatina, cum promptissima recommendatione se ipsam et voluntarium ad obsequia famulatum.

2. Cum pagina vestre Serenitatis apparuit ante scribentis et gratulantis aspectum, experta est mea pura fidelitas quam in dominorum successibus corda subditorum fidelium colletentur. Nam per ea que continebantur in ipsa, cum tota cordis hilaritate concepi qualiter dextera summi Regis vota Cesaris et Auguste feliciter adimplebat. Proinde gradum mee fidelitatis experta, petentis audeo iam inire officium.

3. Ergo ad audientiam vestre Sublimitatis exorans et suppliciter precor et devote deposco quatenus mentis oculis intueri dignemini prelibate interdum fidei puritatem. 4. Verum quia nonnulla regalium clausularum videbatur hortari ut, si quando nuntiorum facultas adesset, Celsitudini regie aliquid peroptando de status mei condizione referrem, quamvis quedam presumptionis facies interdicat, obedientie tamen suadente virtute obediam. 5. Audiat, ex quo iubet, Romanorum pia et serena Maiestas, quoniam tempore missionis presentium coniunx predilectus et ego, Dei dono, vigebamus incolumes, liberorum sospitate gaudentes, tanto solito letiores quanto signa resurgentis Imperii meliora iam secula promittebant.

6. Missum de Castro Poppii xv Kalendas Iunias, faustissimi cursus Henrici Cesaris ad Ytaliam anno primo.

XI.

[Cardinalibus ytalicis Dantes de Florentia, etc.]

1. “Quomodo sola sedet civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium”. Principum quondam Phariseorum cupiditas que sacerdotium vetus abominabile fecit, non modo levitice prolis ministerium transtulit, quin et preelecte civitati David obsidionem peperit et ruinam. 2. Quod quidem de specula punctali eternitatis intuens qui solus eternus est, mentem Deo dignam viri prophetici per Spiritum Sanctum sua iussione impressit, et is sanctam Ierusalem velut exstinctam per verba presignata et nimium, proh dolor!, iterata deflevit.

3. Nos quoque eundem Patrem et Filium, eundem Deum et hominem, nec non eandem Matrem et Virginem profitentes, propter quos et propter quorum salutem ter de caritate interrogatum et dictum est: Petre, pasce sacrosanctum ovile; Romam - cui, post tot triumphorum pompas, et verbo et opere Christus orbis confirmavit imperium, quam etiam illle Petrus, et Paulus gentium predicator, in apostolicam sedem aspergine proprii sanguinis consecravit -, cum Ieremia, non lugenda prevenientes, sed post ipsa dolentes, viduam et desertam lugere compellimur.

4. Piget, heu!, non minus quam plagam lamentabilem cernere heresium, quod impietatis fautores, Iudei, Saraceni et gentes, sabbata nostra rident, et, ut fertur, conclamant: “Ubi est Deus eorum?”; et quod forsan suis insidiis apostate Potestates contra defensantes Angelos hoc adscribunt; et, quod horribilius est, quod astronomi quidam et crude prophetantes necessarium asserunt quod, male usi libertate arbitrii, eligere maluistis.

5. Vos equidem, Ecclesie militantis veluti primi prepositi pili, per manifestam orbitam Crucifixi currum Sponse regere negligentes, non aliter quam falsus auriga Pheton exorbitastis; et quorum sequentem gregem per saltus peregrinationis huius illustrare intererat, ipsum una vobiscum ad precipitium traduxistis. 6. Nec adimitanda recenseo - cum dorsa non vultus, ad Sponse vehiculum habeatis, et vere dici possetis, qui Prophete ostensi sunt, male versi ad templum - vobis ignem de celo missum despicientibus, ubi nunc are ab alieno calescunt; vobis columbas in templo vendentibus, ubi que pretio mensurari non possunt, in detrimentum hinc inde commorantium venalia facta sunt. 7. Sed attendatis ad funiculum, attendatis ad ignem, neque patientiam contemnatis Illius qui ad penitentiam vos expectat. 8. Quod si de prelibato precipitio dubitatur, quid aliud declarando respondeam, nisi quod in Alcimum cum Demetrio consensistis?

9. Forsitan ‘et quis iste, qui Oze repentinum supplicium non formidans, ad arcam, quamvis labantem, se erigit?’ indignanter obiurgabitis. Quippe de ovibus pascue Iesu Christi minima una sum; quippe nulla pastorali auctoritate abutens, quoniam divitie mecum non sunt. Non ergo divitiarum, sed gratia Dei sum id quod sum, et “zelus domus eius comedit me”. 10. Nam etiam “in ore lactentium et infantium” sonuit iam Deo placita veritas, et cecus natus veritatem confessus est, quam Pharisei non modo tacebant, sed et maligne reflectere conabantur. 11. Hiis habeo persuasum quod audeo. Habeo preter hec preceptorem Phylosophum qui, cuncta moralia dogmatizans, amicis omnibus veritatem docuit preferendam. 12. Nec Oze presumptio quam obiectandam quis crederet, quasi temere prorumpentem me inficit sui tabe reatus; quia ille ad arcam, ego ad boves calcitrantes et per abvia distrahentes attendo. Ille ad arcam proficiat qui salutiferos oculos ad naviculam fluctuantem aperuit.

13. Non itaque videor quemquam esacerbasse ad iurgia; quin potius confusionis ruborem et in vobis et aliis, nomine solo archimandritis, per orbem dumtaxat pudor eradicatus non sit totaliter, accendisse; cum de tot pastoris officium usurpantibus, de tot ovibus, et si non abactis, neglectis tamen et incustoditis in pascuis, una sola vox, sola pia, et hec privata, in matris Ecclesie quasi funere audiatur.

14. Quidni? Cupiditatem unusquisque sibi duxit in uxorem, quemadmodum et vos, que nunquam pietatis et equitatis, ut caritas, sed semper impietatis et iniquitatis est genitrix. 15. A, mater piissima, sponsa Christi, que in aqua et Spiritu generas tibi filios ad ruborem! Non caritas, non Astrea, sed filie sanguisuge facte sunt tibi nurus; que quales pariant tibi fetus, preter Lunensem pontificem omnes alii contestantur. 16. Iacet Gregorius tuus in telis aranearum; iacet Ambrosius in neglectis clericorum latibulis; iacet Augustinus abiectus, Dionysius, Damascenus et Beda; et nescio quod Speculum, Innocentium, et Ostiensem declamant. Cur non? Illi Deum querebant, ut finem et optimum; isti census et beneficia consecuntur.

17. Sed, o patres, ne me phenicem extimetis in orbe terrarum; omnes enim que garrio murmurant aut mussant aut cogitant aut somniant, et que inventa non attestantur. 18. Nonnulli sunt in admiratione suspensi: an semper et hoc silebunt, neque Factori suo testimonium reddent? Vivit Dominus, quia qui movit linguam in asina Balaam, Dominus est etiam modernorum brutorum.

19. Iam garrulus factus sum: vos me coegistis. Pudeat ergo tam ab infra, non de celo ut absolvat, argui vel moneri. 20. Recte quidem nobiscum agitur, cum ex ea parte pulsatur ad nos ad quam cum ceteris sensibus inflet auditum, ac pariat

pudor in nobis penitudinem, primogenitam suam, et hec propositum emendationis aggeneret.

21. Quod ut gloriosa longanimitas foveat et defendat, Romam urbem, nunc utroque lumine destitutam, nunc Annibali nedum alii miserandam, solam sedentem et viduam prout superius proclamatur, qualis est, pro modulo vestre ymaginis ante mentales oculos affigatis oportet. 22. Et ad vos hec sunt maxime qui sacrum Tiberim parvuli cognovistis. Nam etsi Latiale caput pie cunctis est Ytalis diligendum tanquam comune sue civilitatis principium, vestrum iuste censetur accuratissime colere ipsum, cum sit vobis principium ipsius quoque esse. 23. Et si ceteros Ytalos in presens miseria dolore confecit et rubore confudit, erubescendum esse vobis dolendumque quis dubitet, qui tam insolite sui vel Solis eclipsis causa fuistis? 24. Tu pre omnibus, Urse, ne degradati college perpetuo remanerent inglorii; et illi, ut militantis Ecclesie veneranda insignia que forsan non emeriti sed inmeriti coacti posuerant, apostolici culminis auctoritate resumerent. 25. Tu quoque, transtiberine sectator factionis alterius, ut ira defuncti Antistitis in te velut ramus insitionis in trunco non suo frondesceret, quasi triumphatam Carthaginem nondum exueras, illustrium Scipionum patrie potuisti hunc animum sine ulla tui iudicii contradictione preferre.

26. Emendabitur quidem - quanquam non sit quin nota cicatrix infamis Apostolicam Sedem usque ad ignem, cui celi qui nunc sunt et terra sunt reservati, deturpet -, si unanimes omnes qui huiusmodi exorbitationis fuistis auctores, pro Sponsa Christi, pro sede Sponse que Roma est, pro Ytalia nostra, et ut plenius dicam, pro tota civitate peregrinante in terris, viriliter propugnetis, ut de palestra iam cepti certaminis undique ab Occeani margine circumspecta, vosmetipsos cum gloria offerentes, audire possitis: “Gloria in excelsis”; et ut Vasconum obprobrium qui tam dira cupidine conflagrantes Latinorum gloriam sibi usurpare contendunt, per secula cuncta futura sit posteris in exemplum.

XII.

[Amico Florentino]

1. In litteris vestris et reverentia debita et affectione receptis, quam repatriatio mea cure sit vobis et animo, grata mente ac diligenti animadversione concepi; et inde tanto me districtius obligastis, quanto rarius exules invenire amicos contingit. 2. Ad illarum vero significata responsio, etsi non erit qualem forsan pusillanimitas appeteret aliquorum, ut suo examine vestri consilii ante iudicium ventiletur, affectuose deposco.

3. Ecce igitur quod per litteras vestras meique nepotis nec non aliorum quamplurium amicorum, significatum est michi per ordinamentum nuper factum Florentie super absolutione bannitorum quod si solvere vellem certam pecunie quantitatem vellemque pati notam oblationis, et absolvi possem et redire ad presens. 4. In qua quidem duo ridenda et male preconsiliata sunt, pater; dico male preconsiliata per illos qui talia expresserunt, nam vestre littere discretius et consultius clausulate nichil de talibus continebant.

5. Estne ista revocatio gratiosa qua Dantes Alagherii revocatur ad patriam, per trilustrium fere perpessus exilium ? Hocne meruit innocentia manifesta quibuslibet? hoc sudor et labor continuatus in studio ? 6. Absit a viro phylosophie domestico temeraria tantum cordis humilitas, ut more cuiusdam Cioli et aliorum infamium quasi vinctus ipse se patiatur offerri! 7. Absit a viro predicante iustitiam ut perpessus iniurias, iniuriam inferentibus, velut benemerentibus, pecuniam suam solvat!

8. Non est hec via redeundi ad patriam, pater mi; sed si alia per vos ante aut deinde per alios invenitur que fame Dantisque honori non deroget, illam non lentis passibus acceptabo; quod si per nullam talem Florentia introitur, nunquam Florentiam introibo. 9. Quidni? nonne solis astrorumque specula ubique conspiciam? nonne dulcissimas veritates potero speculari ubique suo celo, ni prius inglorium ymo ignominiosum populo Florentineque civitati me reddam ? Quippe nec panis deficiet.

XIII.

1. Magnifico atque victoriosissimo Domino, Domino Kani Grandi de la Scala, sacratissimi Cesarei Principatus in urbe Verona et civitate Vicentie Vicario Generali, devotissimus suus Dantes Alagherii, Florentinus natione non moribus, vitam orat per tempora diuturna felicem, et gloriosi nominis perpetuum incrementum.

2. Inclyta vestre Magnificente laus, quam fama vigil volitando disseminat, sic distrahit in diversa diversos, ut hos in spem sue prosperitatis attollat, hos exterminii deiciat in terrorem. Huius quidem preconium, facta modernorum exsuperans, tanquam veri existentia latius, arbitrabar aliquando superfluum. 3. Verum ne diuturna me nimis incertitudo suspenderet, velut Austri regina Hierusalem petiit, velut Pallas petiit Helicona, Veronam petii fidis oculis discursurus audita. Ibique magnalia vestra vidi, vidi beneficia simul et tetigi; et quemadmodum prius dictorum ex parte suspicabar excessum, sic posterius ipsa facta excessiva cognovi. Quo factum est, ut ex auditu solo cum quadam animi subiectione benevolus prius exstiterim; sed ex visu postmodum devotissimus et amicus.

4. Nec reor, amici nomen assumens, ut nonnulli forsitan obiectarent, reatum presumptionis incurrere, cum non minus dispares connectantur quam pares amicitie sacramento. Nam si delectabiles et utiles amicitias inspicere libeat, illis persepius inspicienti patebit, preeminentes inferioribus coniugari personas. 5. Et si ad veram ac per se amicitiam torqueatur intuitus, nonne summorum illustriumque principum plerumque viros fortuna obscuros, honestate preclaros, amicos fuisse constabit? Quidni? Cum etiam Dei et hominis amicitia nequaquam impediatur excessu! 6. Quod si cuiquam, quod asseritur, nunc videretur indignum, Spiritum Sanctum audiat, amicitie sue participes quosdam homines profitentem. Nam in Sapientia de sapientia legitur, quoniam infinitus thesaurus est hominibus, quo usi sunt, participes facti sunt amicitie Dei. 7. Sed habet imperitia vulgi sine discretione iudicium; et quemadmodum solem pedalis magnitudinis arbitratur, sic et circa mores vana credulitate decipitur. Nos autem quibus optimum quod est in nobis noscere datum est, gregum vestigia sectari non decet, quin ymo suis erroribus obviare tenemur. Nam intellectu ac ratione degentes, divina quadam libertate dotati, nullis consuetudinibus adstringuntur. Nec mirum, cum non ipsi legibus sed ipsis leges potius dirigantur. 8. Liquet igitur, quod superius dixi, me scilicet esse devotissimum et amicum, nullatenus esse presumptum.

9. Preferens ergo amicitiam vestram quasi thesaurum carissimum, providentia diligenti et accurata sollicitudine illam servare desidero. 10. Itaque, cum in dogmatibus moralis negotii amicitiam adequari et salvari analogo doceatur, ad retribuendum pro collatis beneficiis plus quam semel analogiam se mihi votivum est; et propter hoc munuscula mea sepe multum conspexi et ab invicem segregavi, nec non segregata percensui, digniusque gratiusque vobis inquirens. 11. Neque ipsi preheminentie vestre congruum comperi magis quam Comedie sublimem canticam, que decoratur titulo Paradisi; et illam sub presenti epistola, tanquam sub epigrammate proprio dedicatam, vobis adscribo, vobis offero, vobis denique recommendo.

12. Illud quoque preterire silentio simpliciter inardescens non sinit affectus, quod in hac donatione plus dono quam domino honoris et fame conferri videri potest; quin ymo, cum eius titulo iam presagium de gloria vestri nominis amplianda, satis attentis videar expressisse; quod de proposito. 13. Sed zelus gratie vestre, quam sitio, vitam parvipendens, a primordio metam prefixam urgebit ulterius. Itaque, formula consummata epistole, ad introductionem oblati operis aliquid sub lectoris officio compendiose aggrediar.

14. Sicut dicit Philosophus in secundo Metaphysicorum: “Sicut res se habet ad esse, sic se habet ad veritatem”; cuius ratio est, quia veritas de re, que in veritate consistit tanquam in subiecto, est similitudo perfecta rei sicut est. 15. Eorum vero que sunt, quedam sic sunt, ut habeant esse absolutum in se; quedam sunt ita, ut habeant esse dependens ab alio per relationem quandam, ut eodem tempore esse, et ad aliud se habere, ut relativa, sicut pater et filius, dominus et servus, duplum et dimidium, totum et pars, et huiusmodi, in quantum talia. 16. Propterea quod esse talium dependet ab alio, consequens est quod eorum veritas ab alio dependeat: ignorato enim dimidio, nunquam cognoscitur duplum; et sic de aliis.

17. Volentes igitur aliqualem introductionem tradere de parte operis alicuius, oportet aliquam notitiam tradere de toto cuius est pars. Quapropter et ego, volens de parte supra nominata totius Comedie aliquid tradere per modum introductionis, aliquid de toto opere premittendum existimavi, ut facilior et perfectior sit ad partem introitus. 18. Sex igitur sunt que in principio cuiusque doctrinalis operis inquirenda sunt, videlicet subiectum, agens, forma, finis, libri titulus, et genus philosophie. De istis tria sunt in quibus pars ista, quam vobis destinare proposui, variatur a toto, scilicet subiectum, forma et titulus; in aliis vero non variatur, sicut apparet inspicienti; et ideo, circa considerationem de toto, ista tria inquirenda seorsum sunt: quo facto, satis patebit ad introductionem partis. 19. Deinde inquiremus alia tria, non solum per respectum ad totum, sed etiam per respectum ad ipsam partem oblatam.

20. Ad evidentiam itaque dicendorum, sciendum est quod istius operis non est simplex sensus, ymo dici potest polysemos, hoc est plurium sensuum; nam primus sensus est qui habetur per litteram, alius est qui habetur per significata per litteram. Et primus dicitur litteralis, secundus vero allegoricus, sive moralis, sive anagogicus. 21. Qui modus tractandi, ut melius pateat, potest considerari in his versibus: “In exitu Israel de Egypto, domus Iacob de populo barbaro, facta est Iudea sanctificatio eius, Israel potestas eius”. Nam si ad litteram solam inspiciemus, significatur nobis exitus filiorum Israel de Egypto, tempore Moysi; si ad allegoriam, nobis significatur nostra redemptio facta per Christum; si ad moralem sensum, significatur nobis conversio anime de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratie; si ad anagogicum, significatur exitus anime sancte ab huius corruptionis servitute ad eterne glorie libertatem. 22. Et quamquam isti sensus mystici variis appellentur nominibus, generaliter omnes dici possunt allegorici, cum sint a litterali sive historiali diversi. Nam allegoria dicitur ab ‘alleon’ grece, quod in latinum dicitur ‘alienum’, sive ‘diversum’.

23. Hiis visis, manifestum est quod duplex oportet esse subiectum circa quod currant alterni sensus. Et ideo videndum est de subiecto huius operis, prout ad litteram accipitur; deinde de subiecto, prout allegorice sententiatur. 24. Est ergo subiectum totius operis, litteraliter tantum accepti, status animarum post mortem simpliciter sumptus. Nam de illo et circa illum totius operis versatur processus.

25. Si vero accipiatur opus allegorice, subiectum est homo, prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem iustitie premiandi et puniendi obnoxius est.

26. Forma vero est duplex, forma tractatus et forma tractandi. Forma tractatus est triplex, secundum triplicem divisionem. Prima divisio est, qua totum opus dividitur in tres canticas. Secunda, qua quelibet cantica dividitur in cantus. Tertia, qua libet cantus dividitur in rithimos. 27. Forma sive modus tractandi est poeticus, fictivus, descriptivus, digressivus, transumptivus; et cum hoc diffinitivus, divisivus, probativus, improbativus, et exemplorum positivus.

28. Libri titulus est: ‘Incipit Comedia Dantis Alagherii, Florentini natione, non moribus’. Ad cuius notitiam sciendum est, quod comedia dicitur a ‘comos’, villa, et ‘oda’, quod est cantus, unde comedia quasi ‘villanus cantus’. 29. Et est comedia genus quoddam poetice narrationis, ab omnibus aliis differens. Differt ergo a tragedia, in materia per hoc, quod tragedia in principio est admirabilis et quieta, in fine seu exitu est fetida et horribilis; et dicitur propter hoc a ‘tragos’, quod est hircus, et oda, quasi ‘cantus hircinus’, idest fetidus ad modum hirci, ut patet per Senecam in suis tragediis. Comedia vero inchoat asperitatem alicuius rei, sed eius materia prospere terminatur, ut patet per Terentium in suis comediis. Et hinc consueverunt dictatores quidam in suis salutationibus dicere loco salutis,

‘tragicum principium, et comicum finem’. 30. Similiter differunt in modo loquendi: elate et sublime tragedia; comedia vero remisse et humiliter; sicut vult Oratius in sua Poetria, ubi licentiat aliquando comicos ut tragedos loqui, et sic e converso:

> Interdum tamen et vocem comedia tollit,
> Iratusque Chremes tumido delitigat ore;
> Et tragicus plerunque dolet sermone pedestri
> Telephus et Peleus *etc*.

31. Et per hoc patet, quod comedia dicitur presens opus. Nam si ad materiam respiciamus, a principio horribilis et fetida est, quia Infernus; in fine prospera, desiderabilis et grata, quia Paradisus; ad modum loquendi, remissus est modus et humilis, quia locutio vulgaris, in qua et muliercule communicant. 32. Et sic patet quare Comedia dicitur. Sunt et alia genera narrationum poeticarum, scilicet carmen bucolicum, elegia, satira, et sententia votiva, ut etiam per Oratium patere potest in sua Poetria; sed de istis ad presens nihil dicendum est.

33. Potest amodo patere quomodo assignandum sit subiectum partis oblate. Nam, si totius operis litteraliter sumpti sic est subiectum: status animarum post mortem, non contractus sed simpliciter acceptus, manifestum est quod hac in parte talis status est subiectum, sed contractus, scilicet status animarum beatarum post mortem. 34. Et si totius operis allegorice sumpti subiectum est homo, prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem est iustitie premiandi et puniendi obnoxius, manifestum est in hac parte hoc subiectum contrahi, et est homo, prout merendo obnoxius est iustitie premiandi.

35. Et sic patet de forma partis per formam adsignatam totius. Nam, si forma tractatus in toto est triplex, in hac parte tantum est duplex, scilicet divisio cantice et cantuum. 36. Non eius potest esse propria forma divisio prima, cum ista pars sit prime divisionis.

37. Patet etiam libri titulus. Nam si titulus totius libri est: ‘Incipit Comedia etc.’, ut supra; titulus autem huius partis est: ‘Incipit cantica tertia Comedie Dantis etc., que dicitur Paradisus’.

38. Inquisitis his tribus in quibus variatur pars a toto, videndum est de aliis tribus in quibus nulla variatio est a toto. Agens igitur totius et partis est ille qui dictus est, et totaliter videtur esse.

39. Finis totius et partis esse posset et multiplex, scilicet propinquus et remotus. Sed omissa subtili investigatione, dicendum est breviter quod finis

totius et partis est, removere viventes in hac vita de statu miserie et perducere ad statum felicitatis.

40. Genus vero philosophie, sub quo hic in toto et parte proceditur, est morale negotium, sive ethica; quia non ad speculandum, sed ad opus inventum est totum et pars. 41. Nam si in aliquo loco vel passu pertractatur ad modum speculativi negotii, hoc non est gratia speculativi negotii, sed gratia operis; quia, ut ait Philosophus in secundo Methaphysicorum, “ad aliquid et nunc speculantur practici aliquando”.

42. Hiis itaque premissis, ad expositionem littere secundum quandam prelibationem accedendum est; et illud prenunciandum, quod expositio littere nihil aliud est quam forme operis manifestatio. 43. Dividitur ergo ista pars, seu tertia cantica, que Paradisus dicitur, principaliter in duas partes, scilicet in prologum et partem executivam. Pars secunda incipit ibi: ‘Surgit mortalibus per diversas fauces’.

44. De parte prima est sciendum quod, quamvis communi ratione dici posset exordium, proprie autem loquendo non debet dici nisi prologus; quod Philosophus in tertio Rhetoricorum videtur innuere, ubi dicit quod “proemium est in oratione rhetorica, sicut prologus in poetica, et preludium in fistulatione”. 45. Est etiam prenotandum quod previatio ista, que communiter exordium dici potest, aliter fit a poetis, aliter a rhetoribus. 46. Rhetores enim concessere prelibare dicenda, ut animum comparent auditoris. Sed poete non solum hoc faciunt, quin ymo post hec invocationem quandam emittunt. 47. Et hoc est eis conveniens, quia multa invocatione opus est eis, cum aliquid contra communem modum hominum a superioribus substantiis petendum sit, quasi divinum quoddam munus. 48. Ergo presens prologus dividitur in partes duas: in prima premittitur quid dicendum sit, in secunda invocatur Apollo; et incipit secunda pars ibi: ‘O bone Apollo, ad ultimum laborem’.

49. Propter primam partem notandum quod ad bene exordiendum tria requiruntur, ut dicit Tullius in Nova Rhetorica, scilicet ut benevolum et attentum et docilem reddat alis auditorem; et hoc maxime in admirabili genere cause, ut ipsemet Tullius dicit. 50. Cum ergo materia circa quam versatur presens tractatus sit admirabilis, et propterea ad admirabile reducenda ista tria intenduntur in principio exordii, sive prologi. Nam dicit se dicturam ea, que vidit in primo celo et retinere mente potuit. 51. In quo dicto omnia illa tria comprehenduntur; nam in utilitate dicendorum benevolentia paratur; in admirabilitate attentio; in possibilitate docilitas. Utilitatem innuit, cum recitaturum se dicit ea que maxime allectiva sunt desiderii humani, scilicet gaudia Paradisi; admirabilitatem tangit, cum promittit se tam ardua, tam sublimia dicere, scilicet conditiones regni

celestis; possibilitatem ostendit, cum dicit se dicturum ea que mente retinere potuit; si enim ipse, et alii poterunt. 52. Hec omnia tanguntur in verbis illis, ubi dicit se fuisse in primo celo, et quod dicere vult de regno celesti quidquid in mente sua, quasi thesaurum, potuit retinere. Viso igitur de bonitate ac perfectione prime partis prologi, ad litteram accedatur.

53. Dicit ergo quod ‘gloria primi Motoris’, qui Deus est, ‘in omnibus partibus universi resplendet’, sed ita ut ‘in aliqua parte magis, et in aliqua minus’. 54. Quod autem ubique resplendeat, ratio et auctoritas manifestat. Ratio sic: Omne quod est, aut habet esse a se, aut ab alio. Sed constat quod habere esse a se non convenit nisi uni, scilicet primo, seu principio, qui Deus est; cum habere esse non arguat per se necesse esse, et per se necesse esse non competat nisi uni, scilicet primo, seu principio, quod est causa omnium; ergo omnia que sunt, preter unum ipsum, habent esse ab alio. 55. Si ergo accipiatur ultimum in universo, non quodcumque, manifestum est quod id habet esse ab aliquo; et illud a quo habet, a se, vel ab aliquo. Si a se, sic est primum; si ab aliquo, et illud similiter vel a se, vel ab aliquo. Et esset sic procedere in infinitum in causis agentibus, ut probatur in secundo Metaphysicorum. 56. Et sic erit devenire ad primum, qui Deus est. Et sic, mediate vel immediate, omne quod habet esse, habet esse ab eo; quia ex eo quod causa secunda recipit a prima, influit super causatum ad modum recipientis et repercutientis radium, propter quod causa prima est magis causa. 57. Et hoc dicitur in libro De Causis, quod “omnis causa primaria plus influit super suum causatum quam causa universalis secunda”. Sed hoc quantum ad esse.

58. Quantum vero ad essentiam, probo sic: Omnis essentia, preter primam, est causata, aliter essent plura que essent per se necesse esse, quod est impossibile: quod causatum, vel a natura vel ab intellectu; et quod a natura est, per consequens causatum est ab intellectu, cum natura sit opus intelligentie. Omne ergo quod est causatum, est causatum ab aliquo intellectu mediate vel immediate. 59. Cum ergo virtus sequatur essentiam cuius est virtus, si essentia intellectiva, est tota et unius que causat. Et sic quemadmodum prius devenire erat ad primam causam ipsius esse, sic nunc essentie et virtutis. 60. Propter quod patet quod omnis essentia et virtus procedat a prima, et intelligentie inferiores recipiant quasi a radiante, et reddant radios superioris ad suum inferius, ad modum speculorum. Quod satis aperte tangere videtur Dionysius de Celesti Hierarchia loquens. 61. Et propter hoc dicitur in libro De Causis quod “omnis intelligentia est plena formis”. Patet ergo quomodo ratio manifestat divinum lumen, idest divinam bonitatem, sapientiam et virtutem, resplendere ubique.

62. Similiter etiam at scientius facit auctoritas. Dicit enim Spiritus Sanctus per Hieremiam: “Celum et terram ego impleo”; et in Psalmo: “Quo ibo a spiritu

tuo? et quo a facie tua fugiam? Si ascendero in celum, tu illic es; si descendero in infernum, ades. Si sumpsero pennas meas etc.” Et Sapientia dicit quod “Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum”. Et Ecclesiasticus in quadragesimo secundo: “Gloria Domini plenum est opus eius”. 63. Quod etiam scriptura paganorum contestatur; nam Lucanus in nono: “Iuppiter est quodcumque vides, quocumque moveris”.

64. Bene ergo dictum est, cum dicit quod divinus radius, seu divina gloria, ‘per universum penetrat et resplendet’: penetrat, quantum ad essentiam; resplendet, quantum ad esse. 65. Quod autem subicit de magis et minus, habet veritatem in manifesto; quoniam videmus in aliquo excellentiori gradu essentiam aliquam, aliquam vero in inferiori; ut patet de celo et elementis, quorum quidem illud incorruptibile, illa vero corruptibilia sunt.

66. Et postquam premisit hanc veritatem, prosequitur ab ea, circumloquens Paradisum; et dicit quod fuit in celo illo quod de gloria Dei, sive de luce, recipit affluentius. 67. Propter quod sciendum quod illud celum est celum supremum, continens corpora universa, et a nullo contentum, intra quod omnia corpora moventur, ipso in sempiterna quiete permanente *** et a nulla corporali substantia virtutem recipiens.

68. Et dicitur empyreum, quod est idem quod celum igne sive ardore flagrans; non quod in eo sit ignis vel ardor materialis, sed spiritualis, quod est amor sanctus, sive caritas.

69. Quod autem de divina luce plus recipiat, potest probari per duo. Primo, per suum omnia continere et a nullo contineri; secundo, per sempiternam suam quietem sive pacem. 70. Quantum ad primum probatur sic: Continens se habet ad contentum in naturali situ, sicut formativum ad formabile, ut habetur in quarto Physicorum. Sed in naturali situ totius universi primum celum est omnia continens; ergo se habet ad omnia sicut formativum ad formabile; quod est se habere per modum cause. Et cum omnis vis causandi sit radius quidam profluens a prima causa, que Deus est, manifestum est quod illud celum quod magis habet rationem cause, magis de luce divina recipit.

71. Quantum ad secundum, probatur sic: Omne quod movetur, movetur propter aliquid quod non habet, quod est terminus sui motus; sicut celum lune movetur propter aliquam partem sui, que non habet illud ubi ad quod movetur; et quia sui pars quelibet non adepto quolibet ubi (quod est impossibile) movetur ad aliud, inde est quod semper movetur et nunquam quiescit, et est eius appetitus. Et quod dico de celo lune, intelligendum est de omnibus preter primum. Omne ergo quod movetur est in aliquo defectu, et non habet totum suum esse simul. 72. Illud igitur celum quod a nullo movetur, in se et in qualibet sui parte habet

quicquid potest modo perfecto, ita quod motu non indiget ad suam perfectionem. Et cum omnis perfectio sit radius Primi, quod est in summo gradu perfectionis, manifestum est quod celum primum magis recipit de luce Primi, qui est Deus. 73. Ista tamen ratio videtur arguere ad destructionem antecedentis, ita quod simpliciter et secundum formam arguendi non probat. Sed si consideremus materiam eius, bene probat, quia de quodam sempiterno, in quo posset defectus sempiternari: ita quod, si Deus non dedit sibi motum, patet quod non dedit sibi materiam in aliquo egentem. 74. Et per hanc suppositionem tenet argumentum ratione materie; et similis modus arguendi est ac si dicerem: Si homo est, est risibile; nam in omnibus convertibilibus tenet similis ratio gratia materie. Sic ergo patet quod cum dicit ‘in illo celo quod plus de luce Dei recipit’, intelligit circumloqui Paradisum, sive celum empyreum.

75. Premissis quoque rationibus consonanter dicit Philosophus in primo De Celo quod celum “tanto habet honorabiliorem materiam istis inferioribus, quanto magis elongatum est ab hiis que hic”. 76. Ad hoc etiam posset adduci quod dicit Apostolus ad Ephesios de Christo: “Qui ascendit super omnes celos, ut impleret omnia”. Hoc est celum deliciarum Domini; de quibus deliciis dicitur contra Luciferum per Ezechielem: “Tu signaculum similitudinis, sapientia plenus et perfectione decorus, in deliciis Paradisi Dei fuisti”.

77. Et postquam dixit quod fuit in loco illo Paradisi per suam circumlocutionem, prosequitur dicens se vidisse aliqua que recitare non potest qui descendit. Et reddit causam, dicens ‘quod intellectus in tantum profundat se in ipsum desiderium suum’, quod est Deus, ‘quod memoria se non potest’. 78. Ad que intelligenda sciendum est quod intellectus humanus in hac vita, propter connaturalitatem et affinitatem quam habet ad substantiam intellectualem separatam, quando elevatur, in tantum elevatur ut memoria post reditum deficiat, propter transcendisse humanum modum. 79. Et hoc insinuatur nobis per Apostolum ad Corinthios loquentem, ubi dicit: “Scio hominem (sive in corpore, sive extra corpus, nescio, Deus scit), raptum usque ad tertium celum, et vidit arcana Dei, que non licet homini loqui”. Ecce, postquam humanam rationem intellectus ascensione transierat, quid extra se ageretur non recordabatur. 80. Et hoc etiam est insinuatum nobis in Matheo, ubi tres discipuli ceciderunt in faciem suam, nihil postea recitantes, quasi obliti. Et in Ezechiele scribitur: “Vidi et cecidi in faciem meam”. Et ubi ista invidis non sufficiant, legant Richardum de Sancto Victore in libro De Contemplatione; legant Bernardum in libro De Consideratione; legant Augustinum in libro De Quantitate Anime, et non invidebunt. 81. Si vero in dispositionem elevationis tante propter peccatum loquentis oblatrarent, legant Danielem, ubi et Nabuchodonosor invenient contra peccatores aliqua vidisse divinitus, oblivionique mandasse. 82. Nam “qui oriri

solem suum facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super iustos et iniustos", aliquando misericorditer ad conversionem, aliquando severe ad punitionem, plus et minus, ut vult, gloriam suam quantumcunque male viventibus manifestat.

83. Vidit ergo, ut dicit, aliqua 'que referre nescit et nequit rediens'. Diligenter quippe notandum est quod dicit 'nescit et nequit'. Nescit quia oblitus, nequit quia, si recordatur et contentum tenet, sermo tamen deficit. 84. Multa namque per intellectum videmus quibus signa vocalia desunt; quod satis Plato insinuat in suis libris per assumptionem metaphorismorum, multa enim per lumen intellectuale vidit que sermone proprio nequivit exprimere.

85. Postea dicit se dicturum illa que de regno celesti retinere potuit; et hoc dicit esse 'materiam' sui operis; que qualia sint et quanta, in parte executiva patebit.

86. Deinde cum dicit: 'O bone Apollo', etc., facit invocationem suam. Et dividitur ista pars in partes duas: in prima invocando petit; in secunda suadet Apollini petitionem factam, remunerationem quandam prenuntians; et incipit secunda pars ibi: 'O divina virtus'. 87. Prima pars dividitur in partes duas: in prima petit divinum auxilium; in secunda tangit necessitatem sue petitionis, quod est iustificare ipsam, ibi: 'Hucusque alterum iugum Parnassi', *etc.*

88. Hec est sententia secunde partis prologi in generali. In speciali vero non exponam ad presens; urget enim me rei familiaris angustia, ut hec et alia utilia rei publice derelinquere oporteat. Sed spero de Magnificentia vestra, ut alias habeatur procedendi ad utilem expositionem facultas.

89. In parte vero executiva, que fuit divisa iuxta totum prologum, nec dividendo nec sententiando quicquam dicetur ad presens, nisi hoc, quod ubique procedetur ascendendo de celo in celum, et recitabitur de animabus beatis inventis in quolibet orbe, et quod vera illa beatitudo in sentiendo veritatis principium consistit; ut patet per Iohannem ibi: "Hec est vita eterna, ut cognoscant te Deum verum", etc.; et per Boetium in tertio De Consolatione ibi: "Te cernere finis". Inde est quod ad ostendendum gloriam beatitudinis in illis animabus, ab eis, tanquam videntibus omnem veritatem, multa querentur que magnam habent utilitatem et delectationem. 90. Et quia, invento principio seu primo, videlicet Deo, nihil est quod ulterius queratur, cum sit Alpha et O, idest principium et finis, ut visio Iohannis designat, in ipso Deo terminatur tractatus, qui est benedictus in secula seculorum.

The Biography

Dante in Exile – an anonymous Renaissance work

DANTE: HIS TIMES AND HIS WORK by Arthur John Butler

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Portrait of Dante by Sandro Botticelli

CHAPTER I.

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The person who sets to work to write about Dante at the present day has two great difficulties to reckon with: the quantity which has already been written on the subject, and the quantity which remains to be written. The first involves the reading of an enormous mass of literature in several languages, and very various in quality; but for the comfort of the young student, it may at once, and once for all, be stated that he can pretty safely ignore everything written between 1400 and 1800. The subject of commentaries, biographies, and other helps, or would-be helps, will be treated of later on. Here we need only say that the Renaissance practically stifled anything like an intelligent study of Dante for those four centuries; and it was not until a new critical spirit began to apply to it the methods which had hitherto been reserved for the Greek and Latin classics, that the study got any chance of development. How enormously it has developed during the present century needs not to be said. It may suffice to point out that the British Museum Catalogue shows editions of the *Commedia* at the rate of one for every year since 1800, and other works on Dante in probably five times that proportion.

Now, it has been said of the *Commedia*, and the remark is equally true of Dante's other works, that it is like the Bible in this respect: every man finds in it what he himself brings to it. The poet finds poetry, the philosopher philosophy; the scientific man science as it was known in 1300; the politician politics; heretics have even found heresy. Nor is this very surprising when we consider what were the author's surroundings. Naturally, no doubt, a man of study and contemplation, his lot was cast in the midst of a stirring, even a turbulent, society, where it was hardly possible for any individual to escape his share of the public burdens. Ablebodied men could not be spared when, as was usually the case, fighting was toward; all men of mental capacity were needed in council or in administration. And, after all, the area to be administered, the ground to be fought over, were so small, that the man of letters might do his duty by the community and yet have plenty of time to spare for his studies. He might handle his pike at Caprona or Campaldino one day, and be at home among his books the next. Then, again, the society was a cultivated and quick-witted one, with many interests. Arts and letters were in high esteem, and eminence in them as sure a road to fame as warlike prowess or political distinction. From all this it is clear that the Florentine of the thirteenth century had points of contact with life on

every side; every gate of knowledge lay open to him, and he could explore, if he pleased, every one of its paths. They have now been carried further, and a lifetime is too short for one man to investigate thoroughly more than one or two; but in those days it was still possible for a man of keen intelligence, added to the almost incredible diligence, as it appears to us, of the Middle Ages, to make himself acquainted with all the best that had been done and said in the world.

This it is which forms at once the fascination and the difficulty of Dante's great work. Of course, if we content ourselves with reading it merely for its "beauties," for the æsthetic enjoyment of an image here and an allusion there, for the trenchant expression of some thought or feeling at the roots of human nature, there will be no need of any harder study than is involved in going through it with a translation. Indeed, it will hardly be worth while to go to the original at all. The pleasure, one might almost say the physical pleasure, derived from sonorous juxtaposition of words, such as we obtain from Milton or from Shelley, is scarcely to be genuinely felt in the case of a foreign language; and the beauties of matter, as distinguished from those of form, are faithfully enough rendered by Cary or Longfellow.

It may, however, be safely assumed that few intelligent students will rest content with this amount of study. They will find at every turn allusions calling for explanation, philosophical doctrines to be traced to their sources, judgements on contemporary persons and events to be verified. On every page they will meet with problems the solution of which has not yet been attempted, or attempted only in the most perfunctory way. For generation after generation readers have gone on accepting received interpretations which only tell them what their own wits could divine without any other assistance than the text itself gives. No commentator seems yet to have realised that, in order to understand Dante thoroughly, he must put himself on Dante's level so far as regards a knowledge of all the available literature. The more obvious quarries from which Dante obtained the materials for his mighty structure — the Bible, Virgil, Augustine, Aquinas, Aristotle — have no doubt been pretty thoroughly examined, and many obscurities which the comments of Landino and others only left more obscure have thus been cleared up; but a great deal remains to be done. Look where one may in the literature which was open to Dante, one finds evidence of his universal reading. We take up such a book as Otto of Freising's *Annals* (to which, with his *Acts of Frederick I.*, we shall have to refer again), and find the good bishop moralising thus on the mutability of human affairs, with especial reference to the break-up of the Empire in the middle of the ninth century: —

"Does not worldly honour seem to turn round and round after the fashion of one stricken with fever? For such place their hope of rest in a change of posture,

and so, when they are in pain, throw themselves from side to side, turning over continually."

It is hard not to suppose that Dante had this passage in his mind when he wrote that bitter apostrophe to his own city with which the sixth canto of the *Purgatory* ends: —

"E se ben ti ricorda, e vedi lume, Vedrai te somigliante a quella inferma, Che non può trovar posa in su le piume, Ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma."

It is hardly too much to say that one cannot turn over a couple of pages of any book which Dante may conceivably have read without coming on some passage which one feels certain he had read, or at the very least containing some information which one feels certain he possessed. A real "Dante's library" would comprise pretty well every book in Latin, Italian, French, or Provençal, "published," if we may use the term, up to the year 1300. Of course a good many Latin books were (may one say fortunately?) in temporary retirement at that time; but even of these, whether, as has been suggested, through volumes, now lost, of "Elegant Extracts," or by whatever other means, more was evidently known than is always realised.

We must, however, beware of treating Dante merely as a repertory of curious lore or museum of literary *bric-à-brac* — a danger almost as great as that of looking at him from a purely æsthetic point of view. He had no doubt read more widely than any man of his age, and he is one of the half-dozen greatest poets of all time. But his claim on our attention rests on even a wider basis than these two qualities would afford. He represents as it were the re-opening of the lips of the human race: "While I was musing, the fire kindled, and at last I spake with my tongue." The old classical literature had said its last word when Claudian died; and though men continued to compose, often with ability and intelligence, the histories and chronicles which practically formed the only non-theological writings of the so-called "Dark Ages," letters in the full sense of the term lay dormant for centuries. Not till the twelfth century was far advanced did any signs of a re-awakening appear. Then, to use a phrase of Dante's, the dead poetry arose, and a burst of song came almost simultaneously from all Western Europe. To this period belong the Minnesingers of Germany, the Troubadours of Provence, the unknown authors of the lovely romance — poetical in feeling, though cast chiefly in a prose form — *Aucassin et Nicolete*, and of several not less lovely English ballads and lyrics. Even the heavy rhymed chronicles begin to be replaced by romances in which the true poetic fire breaks out, such as the *Nibelungen Lied* (in its definitive form) and the *Chronicle of the Cid*.

In the new poetry two features strike us at once. The sentiment of love between man and woman, which with the ancients and even with early Christian writers scarcely ever rises beyond the level of a sensual passion, becomes transfigured into a profound emotion touching the deepest roots of a man's nature, and acting as an incentive to noble conduct; and, closely connected with this, the influence of external nature upon the observer begins for the first time to be recognised and to form a subject for poetical treatment. Horace has several charming descriptions of the sights and sounds of spring; but they suggest to him merely that life is short, or that he is thirsty, and in either case he cannot do better than have another drink in company with a friend. So with Homer and Virgil. External nature and its beauty are often touched off in two or three lines which, once read, are never forgotten; but it is always as ornament to a picture, not auxiliary to the expression of a mood. You may search classical literature in vain for such passages as Walther von der Vogelweide's: —

"Dô der sumer komen was Und die bluomen durch daz gras Wünneclîche ensprungen, Aldā die vogele sungen, Dâr kom ich gegangen An einer anger langen, Dâ ein lûter brunne entspranc; Vor dem walde was sī ganc, Dâ diu nahtegale sanc;"

or the unknown Frenchman's: —

"Ce fu el tans d'esté, el mois de mai, que li jor sont caut, lonc, et cler, et les nuits coies et series. Nicolete jut une nuit en son lit, et vit la lune cler par une fenestre, et si oi le lorseilnol center en garding, se li sovint d'Aucassin sen ami qu'ele tant aimoit;"

or the equally unknown Englishman's: —

"Bytuene Mershe and Averil, When spray biginneth to springe, The lutel foul hath hire wyl On hyre lud to synge; Ich libbe in love-longinge For semlokest of alle thinge, He may me blisse bringe, Icham in hire baundoun."

But it is hardly necessary to multiply instances. By the middle of the thirteenth century the spring, and the nightingales, and the flowering meadows had become a commonplace of amatory and emotional poetry.

So far, however, poetry was exclusively lyrical. The average standard of versifying was higher, perhaps, than it has ever been before or since. Every man of education seems to have been able to turn a sonnet or ode. Men of religion, like St. Francis or Brother Jacopone of Todi; statesmen, like Frederick II. and his confidant, Peter de Vineis; professional or official persons, like Jacopo the notary of Lentino, or Guido dalle Colonne the judge of Messina; fighting men, like several of the Troubadours; political intriguers, like Bertrand del Born — all have left verses which, for beauty of thought and melody of rhythm, have

seldom been matched. But the great poem was yet to come, which was to give to the age a voice worthy of its brilliant performance. It is not only in literature that it displays renewed vitality. Turn where we will, in every department of human energy it must have been brilliant beyond any that the world has ever seen. It stood between two worlds, but we cannot say of them that they were

"One dead, The other powerless to be born."

The old monarchy was dying, had indeed, as Dante regretfully perceived, died before he was born, and the trumpet-call of the *De Monarchia*, wherewith he sought to revive it, was addressed to a generation which had other ideals of government; but it had set in a blaze of splendour, and its last wielder, Frederick II., was, not unfitly, known as the Wonder of the World. The mediæval Papacy, though about to undergo a loss of prestige which it never retrieved, outlived its rival, and had seldom been a greater force in the political world than it was in the hands of the ambitious and capable Boniface VIII. The scholastic philosophy, which had directed the minds of men for many generations, was soon to make way for other forms of reasoning and other modes of thought; but its greatest exponent, St. Thomas Aquinas, was Dante's contemporary for nine years. These examples will serve to show that the old systems were capable to the very last of producing and influencing great men.

Meantime the new order was showing no lack of power to be born. Two of our countrymen, Roger Bacon and, somewhat later, William of Ockham, sowed, each in his own way, the seeds which were to bear fruit in the science and speculation of far distant ages. In the arts, architecture reached its highest pitch of splendour; and painting was at the outset of the course which was to culminate, more than two hundred years later, in Titian and Raffaelle. But in no field did the energy of the thirteenth century manifest itself as in that of politics. With the collapse of the Empire came the first birth of the "nationalities" of modern Europe. The process indeed went on at very different rates. The representative constitution of England, the centralised government of France were by the end of the century fairly started on the lines which they have followed ever since. But England had never owned allegiance to the Emperor, while France had pretty well forgotten whence it had got the name which had replaced that of Gaul. In the countries where the Empire had till recently been an ever-present power, Germany and Italy, the work of consolidation went on far less rapidly; indeed, it has been reserved for our own age to see it completed. With Germany we have here nothing directly to do; but it is all-important to the right understanding of Dante's position that we should glance briefly at the political state of Italy and especially of Tuscany during the latter half of the thirteenth century. By good fortune we have very copious information on this

matter. A contemporary and neighbour of Dante's, by name John Villani, happened to be at Rome during the great Jubilee of 1300. The sight of the imperial city and all its ancient glories set him meditating on its history, written, as he says (in a collocation of names which looks odd to us, but was usual enough then), "by Virgil, by Sallust and Lucan, by Titus Livius, Valerius, and Paulus Orosius," and moved him, as an unworthy disciple, to do for his native city what they had done for Rome. The result was the most genial and generally delightful work of history that has been written since Herodotus. Villani, who lived till 1348, when the plague carried him off, seems to have been a man of an equable disposition and sober judgement. Like Dante and all the Florentines of that day, he belonged to the Guelf party; and, unlike his great fellow-citizen, he adhered to it throughout, though by no means approving all the actions of its leaders. After the fashion of the time, he begins his chronicle with the Tower of Babel; touches on Dardanus, Priam, and the Trojan war; records the origin of the Tuscan cities; and so by easy stages comes down towards the age in which he lived. The earlier portions, of course, are more entertaining and suggestive than trustworthy in detail; but as he approaches a time for which he had access to living memory, and still more when he records the events of which he was himself a witness, he is our best authority.

CHAPTER II.

GUELFS AND GHIBELINES

Mention was made, in the last chapter, of the “Guelf” party, and this, with its opposite, the party of the “Ghibelines,” fills the entire field of Italian politics during Dante’s life, and indeed for long afterwards. It would be impossible in the space of these pages to follow up all the tangled threads which have attached themselves to those famous names; but since we may be, to use a picturesque phrase of Carlyle’s, “thankful for any hook whatever on which to hang half-an-acre of thrums in fixed position,” a few of the more prominent points in the early history of the great conflict shall be noted here.

As every one knows, the names originally came from Germany, and to that country we must turn for a short time to know their import.

About seven miles to the north-east of Stuttgart, in what is now the kingdom of Wurtemberg, is a small town called Waiblingen, where was once a stronghold, near the borders of Franconia and Suabia (or Alemannia), belonging to the Franconian dukes. Conrad, often called “the Salic,” head of that house, was raised to the throne of Germany and the Empire in 1024. His line held the imperial crown for just a century, in the persons of himself and three Henries, who are known as the second, third, and fourth, or third, fourth, and fifth, according as we reckon their places among Roman Emperors or German Kings; Henry III. (or IV.) being famous as the great opponent of Pope Gregory VII.; Henry IV. (or V.) interesting to us as the first husband of the daughter of Henry I. of England, renowned in English history as the Empress Maud. The last Henry died childless in 1125. But the Franconian line was not extinct. Half a century or so before, Bishop Otto of Freising tells us “a certain count, by name Frederick, sprung from one of the noblest families of Suabia, had founded a colony in a stronghold called Staufen.” Staufen, better known as Hohenstaufen, is a lofty hill about twenty miles from Waiblingen, and within the Suabian frontier. Frederick had been staunch to Henry IV. in his time of greatest difficulty, and received as his reward, together with the dukedom of Suabia, which the house of Zähringen had forfeited through disloyalty, the hand of the Emperor’s daughter Agnes. By her he had two sons, Frederick, who succeeded to his own duchy of Suabia, and Conrad, who received from his uncle Henry V. that of Franconia, including no doubt the lordship of Waiblingen. At Henry’s death Frederick and Conrad, being then thirty-five and thirty-three years old respectively, were the most powerful princes of the Empire. Henry had designated Frederick as his successor; but the

electors thought otherwise. At the instance of the Archbishop of Mainz, between whom and the Hohenstaufen there was no love lost, and, as it would seem, not without pressure from Lewis VI. of France, whom Henry's death had just saved from having to face an alliance between England and Germany, they chose Lothar, Duke of Saxony.

We will now quote Otto of Freising once more. "Up to the present time," he says, writing of the year 1152, "two families have been famous in the Roman Empire, about the parts where Gaul and Germany meet, the Henries of Waiblingen, and the Welfs of Altdorf." The Welfs go back to by far the greater antiquity. They probably did not originally belong to the Bajovarian stock, for we read elsewhere that they had "large possessions in the parts where Alemannia meets the Pyrenæan Mountains," as Otto usually designates the Alps west of the Brenner. This Altdorf is a village near Ravensburg in Wurtemberg, between Ulm and Friedrichshafen. We first meet with the name in history about the year 820, when the Emperor Lewis I., "the Pious," married as his second wife Judith, "daughter of the most noble Count Welf." Somewhere about the middle of the tenth century, a Rudolf of the race was Count of Bozen. His son Welf took part in the insurrection of the Dukes of Worms and Suabia against their step-father Conrad II., "the Salic," and lost some of his territories in consequence, Bozen passing to Etiko, an illegitimate member of the same house. The family must have soon been restored to the imperial favour, for before 1050 Welf III. appears as Duke of Bavaria.

At his death, without issue, in 1055, he was succeeded by the son of his sister, who had married Azzo II. of Este. This Welf IV. fought on the side of Henry IV., against the revolted Saxons at the Unstrut, but soon rebelled himself. He became for a time the husband of the "great Countess" Matilda of Tuscany. Through him and his son Henry, "the Black," the line was maintained; and though during the period at which we have arrived the head of the family for several generations bore the name of Henry, it is usually spoken of as "the house of the Welfs," and the name is borne by some member of the family at most times. At the accession of Lothar II. the head of the house was Henry, surnamed "the Proud." With him the new emperor at once made close alliance, giving him his daughter Gertrude in marriage. Henry's sister Judith was already married to Frederick of Suabia, but he sided with his father-in-law, and a struggle began which lasted for ten years, and in which the Hohenstaufen brothers had not entirely the worst of it. Conrad was actually anointed at Monza as King of Italy; but in the end, through the intervention of St. Bernard, peace was made, and lasted during the few remaining months of Lothar's life. At his death in 1137 Conrad was elected. His first act was to take the duchy of Bavaria from Henry,

and bestow it on Leopold, the Marquis of Austria, his own half-brother, and whole brother to Bishop Otto, the historian. Henry died very soon, leaving a young son, afterwards known as Henry "the lion," and a brother, Welf, who at once took up the quarrel on behalf of his nephew. He beat Leopold; but when, emboldened by this success, he proceeded to attack the Emperor, who was besieging the castle of Weinsberg, in Franconia, he suffered a severe defeat. At this battle we are told the cries of the contending sides were "Welf!" and "Waiblingen!" Why the name of an obscure fortress should have been used as a battle-cry for the mighty house of Hohenstaufen, we shall probably never know; it may be that it was a chance selection as the password for the day. However that may be, the battle-cries of Weinsberg were destined to resound far into future ages. Modified to suit non-Teutonic lips, they became famous throughout the civilised world as the designations of the two parties in a struggle which divided Italy for centuries, and of which the last vibrations only died down, if indeed they have died down, in our own day.

Of all faction-wars which history records, this is the most complicated, the most difficult to analyse into distinct issues. The Guelfs have been considered the Church or Papal party; and no doubt there is some truth in this view. Indeed, there seems to have been some hereditary tradition of the kind dating from a much earlier generation; long, in fact, before the Ghibeline name had been heard of. When, as we have seen, Countess Matilda of Tuscany, the champion of Gregory VII., was looking out for a second husband, she fixed upon Welf of Bavaria, presumably the "dux Noricorum," who, as Bishop Otto tells us, "in the war with the Emperor, destroyed the cities of Freising and Augsburg." Their union did not last long, for Matilda seems to have been hard to please in the matter of husbands; but the fact of his selection looks as if he had been a *persona grata* with the Papal See. It is somewhat significant, too, that Machiavelli regards the contest between Henry IV. and the Papacy as having been "the seed of the Guelf and Ghibeline races, whereby when the inundation of foreigners ceased, Italy was torn with intestine wars." Yet we may shrewdly suspect that it was not so much any special devotion to the Church, as the thwarted ambition of a powerful house, which made the Welfs to be a thorn in the side first of the Franconian, then of the Suabian Emperors. At any rate, when a representative of the family, in the person of Otto IV., at last reached "the dread summit of Cæsarean power," the very Pope, whose support had placed him on the throne, found himself within little more than a year under the familiar necessity of excommunicating the temporal head of Christendom. Still, in Italy no doubt the Guelfs, politically at any rate, held by the Church, while the Ghibelines had the reputation of being, as a party, at least tainted with what we should now call

materialism. It will be remembered that among the sinners in this kind, who occupy the burning tombs within the walls of the city of Dis, Dante places both the Emperor Frederick II., the head of Ghibelinism, and Farinata degli Uberti, the vigorous leader of the party in Tuscany, while the only Guelf who appears there is one who probably was a very loose adherent to his own faction.

Less justified, it would seem, is the idea that the Guelfs were specially the patriotic party in Italy. No doubt the Popes at one time tried to pose as the defenders of Italian liberties against German tyrants, and some modern historians, forgetting the mediæval conception of the Empire, have been inclined to accept this view. But when it suited his purpose, the Pope was ready enough to support an "anti-Cæsar" who was no less a German, or even to call in a French invader. The truth is that at that time (and for many centuries afterwards), no conception of "Italy" as a nation had entered into men's minds. We do not always realise that until the year 1870, the territory, well enough defined by Nature, which forms the modern kingdom of Italy, had never, except indeed as part of a far wider Empire, owned the rule of a single sovereign. Patriotism hardly extended beyond the walls of a man's own city. Even Dante feels that residence in Lucca, Bologna, or Verona is an exile as complete as any, and that his only *patria* is Florence, though it may be safely said that to him, if to any living man, the idea of an Italian nation had presented itself.

The one argument which we can find to support this view lies in the fact that while the chief Guelf names are those of burgher families, many of the leading Ghibeline houses were undoubtedly of German origin. At Florence the Uberti, at Bologna the Lamberti, show their descent in their names. Villani tells us that the Emperor Otto I. delighted in Florence, "and when he returned to Germany certain of his barons remained there and became citizens." The two families just mentioned are specified. So far, then, the Guelfs may be regarded as representing native civic liberties against an alien feudal nobility, and the struggle between the two factions will fall into line with that which at a somewhat later date went on in Germany between the traders of the cities and the "robber-barons" of the country. In this aspect we may see the full meaning of Dante's continual allusion to the sin of avarice, under the image of the "wolf;" an allusion, again, which the original name whence the Guelf party took its appellation would specially point.

How and when the names first appeared in Italy we do not know. The first manifestation of resistance on the part of the cities to the Imperial control was given when Milan withstood Frederick Barbarossa — in defence, it may be noted, of its own right to oppress its weaker neighbours; but during the war which followed, and which was terminated by Frederick's defeat at Legnano, the

head of the Welfs, Henry the Lion, was for most of the time fighting on the Imperial side, and though he deserted Frederick at the last, he does not seem to have given any active help to the Lombard League. Yet it may well be that in his defection we have to see a stage in the transition from Welf to Guelf. It is, however, not in Lombardy, but in Tuscany, that the names of Guelf and Ghibeline, as recognised party designations, first appear. Machiavelli says — perhaps by a confusion with the Black and White factions, of whom we shall hear later — that they were first heard in Pistoia; but however this may be, they would seem to have been definitely accepted by 1215, to which year Villani assigns their introduction into Florence.

We have now reached the first date, it may be said, which students of Dante will have to remember; a date which to him, and equally to the sober chronicler Villani, marked the beginning of troubles for the city which both loved as a mother, though to the greater son she was "a mother of small love." The occasion is so important that it ought to be related in the historian's own words: —

"In the year of Christ 1215, one Messer Bondelmonte, of the Bondelmonti, a noble citizen of Florence, having promised to take to wife a damsel of the house of the Amidei, honourable and noble citizens; as this Messer Bondelmonte, who was a gay and handsome cavalier, was riding through the city, a lady of the Donati family called to him, speaking evil of the lady who had been promised to him, how that she was not fair nor fitting for him, and saying: 'I have kept my daughter here for you,' showed him the maiden; and she was very fair. And straightway falling enamoured of her, he gave her his troth, and espoused her to wife; for which cause the kinsfolk of the first promised lady gathered together, and being grieved for the shame that Messer Bondelmonte had wrought them, they took on them the accursed quarrel whereby the city of Florence was laid waste and broken up. For many houses of the nobles bound themselves together by an oath to do a shame to the aforesaid Bondelmonte in vengeance for those injuries. And as they were in council among themselves in what fashion they should bring him down, Mosca of the Lamberti said the ill word: "A thing done hath an end," meaning that he should be slain. And so it came to pass; for on the morning of Easter Day they assembled in the house of the Amidei by St. Stephen's, and the said Messer Bondelmonte, coming from beyond Arno, nobly clad in new white clothes, and riding on a white palfrey, when he reached the hither end of the Old Bridge, just by the pillar where was the image of Mars, was thrown from his horse by Schiatta of the Uberti, and by Mosca Lamberti and Lambertuccio of the Amidei assailed and wounded, and his throat was cut and an end made of him by Oderigo Fifanti; and one of the counts from Gangalandi was

with them. For the which thing's sake the city flew to arms and uproar, and this death of Messer Bondelmonte was the cause and beginning of the accursed Guelf and Ghibeline parties in Florence, albeit that before this the factions among the nobles of the city had been plenty, and there had been the parties I have said, by reason of the conflicts and questions between the Church and the Empire; but through the death of Messer Bondelmonte all the families of the nobles and other citizens of Florence took sides with them, and some held with the Bondelmonti, who took the Guelf side and were its leaders, and others with the Uberti, who were head of the Ghibelines. Whence followed much havoc and ruin to our city, and one may think that it will never have an end if God put not a term to it."

The historian proceeds to enumerate the noble families who joined either side. Curiously enough, they were at first evenly divided — thirty-eight to thirty-eight. Not much is to be inferred from the names, though it is somewhat significant that of those, some half a dozen families in all, whom Villani, himself a Guelf, notes as having only recently attained to nobility, all joined the Guelf party. There seems also to have been a tendency for Ghibeline houses to become Guelf, which is not balanced by any defections in the opposite sense, so that the balance of parties was soon disturbed in favour of the Guelfs. At first, however, though "there was a division among the nobles of the city in that one loved the lordship of the Church, and the other that of the Empire, yet in regard to the state and welfare of the commonwealth all were in concord."

This state of things did not last long. In 1220 Frederick II. was crowned Emperor at Rome. Up till that time he had been more or less a *protégé* of the Popes. First Innocent III., then Honorius III., had kept a fatherly eye upon his youth and early manhood, and for a time Church and Empire seemed to pull together. Honorius had, indeed, occasion to write severely to him more than once, but there was no breach of the peace. The accession of Gregory IX., in 1227, changed the aspect of affairs. Before the year was out, Frederick, like most of his predecessors for 200 years past, was under the ban of the Church: and from this time forward there was an end of peace and quiet government in Northern Italy. "Before Frederick met with opposition," Dante makes a Lombard gentleman of the last generation say, "valour and courtesy were wont to be found in the land which Adige and Po water; now may any man safely go that way, who through shame has left off to converse with good men or approach them."

Florence seems to have remained longer than most of the chief cities aloof from the main contest. She had her own wars with Pisa, beginning with a private quarrel at the Emperor's coronation (in which we are expressly told that both parties united), and afterwards with Siena; and the great houses did a certain

amount of private fighting; “but still the people and commonwealth of Florence continued in unity, to the welfare and honour and stability of the republic.” In 1248, however, Frederick turned his attention in that direction, moved, it may be, by the growing strength of the Guelfs. His natural son, Frederick of Antioch, was sent with a force of German men-at-arms, and after some fierce street fighting, the Guelfs were driven out.

The Ghibeline supremacy was short-lived. Their nobles, especially the great house of the Uberti, became unpopular by reason of the exactions which they enforced; they got beaten in a fight with some of the banished Guelfs at no great distance from the city; and before the end of 1250 a meeting of “the good men,” as Villani calls them, or, as we should say, the middle class, limited the power of the Podestà, and appointed a Captain of the People to manage the internal affairs of the city, with a council of twelve Elders. Other important changes were made at the same time, and the new constitution — the third recorded in Florentine history — was known as the “Primo Popolo.” The death of Frederick in the same year still further weakened the Ghibelines. Some of them were banished, and the exiled Guelfs were recalled. Peace, however, seems to have been kept between the parties for some time, and when in 1255 Count Guido Guerra on his own account expelled the Ghibelines from Arezzo, the Florentines restored them, and lent the Aretines money to pay a fine which the Guelf chief had inflicted; “but I know not if they ever got it back,” says Villani.

Again the compromise proved unstable. Manfred, Frederick’s natural son, to whom, during the childhood of his young nephew, Conradin, the championship of the Hohenstaufen cause had fallen, was daily increasing in strength. His orders came to the Ghibelines of Florence to crush the popular party; and the latter, being warned in time, drove out all the great Ghibeline families. Two years later these had their revenge. On September 4, 1260, a date much to be remembered in the history of these times, the banished Ghibelines, aided by eight hundred of Manfred’s German horse, seized the opportunity of hostilities between the Florentines and the Sienese to meet their opponents in a pitched battle. This took place on the Arbia, near the fortress of Montaperti, to the east of Siena. The Guelfs were utterly routed, partly, it would seem, through the incompetence of some of the Elders who accompanied the army, and who, civilians though they were, overruled the judgement of the military leaders, and accepted battle under unfavourable conditions; and partly through the treachery of some Ghibelines who, not having been exiled, were serving in the Florentine host. Readers of the *Commedia* will remember the name of Bocca degli Abati, placed by Dante in the lowest pit of hell.

Sixty-five of the leading Guelf families fled to Lucca, while the Ghibelines entered Florence, and appointed Guido Novello, of the great house of the Conti Guidi, Imperial Podestà. A meeting of the leaders of the party from Pisa, Siena, and Arezzo was held at Empoli, and a proposal was made on behalf of the rival cities, to raze Florence to the ground as a fortified city, and so preclude her revival as a Guelf stronghold. For once, however, a man was found to set patriotism above party. The great Farinata degli Uberti, whose wise counsel and warlike skill had mainly contributed to the victory, rose, with the same magnificent scorn, we may suppose, that Dante afterwards saw him display for the torments of Hell, and let it be known that, so long as he had life in him, he would resist any such measure at the sword's point. Count Giordano, the commander of the Germans, who had convened the meeting, gave in, and Florence was saved.

This was the last gleam of success which the Imperial cause was to enjoy in Tuscany for nearly half a century. Soon after the battle of Montaperti, Urban IV. was elected to the Papal See. He was a Frenchman by birth, "son of a shoemaker, but a valiant man and wise," says Villani. In view of the growing power of Manfred, vigorous steps had to be taken. The exiled Florentine Guelfs had made a fruitless attempt to effect a diversion in Germany, by inciting the young Conradin to oppose the acting head of his house. This old expedient having failed, Urban turned his eyes towards his own country. Charles of Anjou, brother of Saint Lewis, was at that time, next to the reigning sovereigns, the most powerful prince in Christendom, and to his aid the Pope appealed. Himself a man of Puritanical strictness in his life, and devoted to the Church, Charles was ready enough to accept the call, which appealed alike to his principles and to his ambition, and to act as the champion of the Holy See against the dissolute and freethinking Manfred; and the influence of his wife, the only one of Raymond Berenger's four daughters who was not actually or in prospect a queen, was thrown on the same side. After keeping Easter 1265 at Paris, Charles set out, and landed at the mouth of the Tiber in May. In December he was crowned at Rome King of Naples, Sicily, and Apulia. Two months later, at the end of February 1266, Charles and Manfred met near Benevento. After some hard fighting, of which the German troops seem to have borne the brunt, the battle was decided against Manfred by the desertion of his Apulian barons, and he himself was slain. His defeat gave the final blow to the Ghibeline cause in Tuscany. Only Pisa and Siena remained faithful. In Florence an attempt was made to avoid civil strife by the device of doubling the office of Podestà. Two gentlemen from Bologna, Catalano de' Malavolti and Loderingo de' Landolò, a Guelf and a Ghibeline, were appointed, and they nominated a council of thirty-six, chosen

from both sides. But this plan did not work well. Party spirit had grown too violent to allow of half measures, and before the year was out the people rose again, and the Ghibelines were banished for good and all.

CHAPTER III.

DANTE'S EARLY DAYS

In the month when Charles of Anjou sailed up the Tiber to Rome, a child was born at Florence to a citizen named Alighiero, son of Bellincione. We do not know for certain his *casato*, or family name. Bellincione's father was another Alighiero, or, as it was originally written, Aldighiero. His father was Cacciaguida, who had a brother named Eliseo; from which it has been conjectured that he may have belonged to the prominent house of the Elisei, which is known to have existed as far back as the beginning of the eleventh century, since it was not uncommon for members of a family to bear the founder's name. We know, further, that the name of Alighiero came into the family with Cacciaguida's wife, who belonged to some city near the Po, probably Ferrara, where a family of Aldighieri is known to have existed. In any case, it was originally no Florentine name, and it may be doubted if it ever was recognised as the appellation of a family. True, Dante is once or twice referred to as "Dantes de Alegheriis," but this may be due to the fact that he was known to have had recently two ancestors of the name. He himself, if we may trust the evidence of letters ascribed to him, seems to have written "Dantes Alligherius," while his son calls him Dantes Aligherii, and himself Petrus Dantis Aligherii, "Peter, son of Dante, son of Alighiero." In the official Florentine documents, where his name occurs, it is "Dantes Allegherii" or "Dante d'Alighiero," "Dante the son of Alighiero," and no more. The form "degli Alighieri," which would indicate a true family name, we find in no undoubtedly contemporary document.

In view of this initial uncertainty, the discussion whether the poet was of "noble" family or not seems a trifle superfluous. His great-great-grand-father, Cacciaguida, is made to say (*Par.*, xv. 140) that he himself received knighthood from the Emperor Conrad III. (of Hohenstaufen). This would confer nobility; but it would appear that it would be possible for later generations to lose that status, and there are some indications that Dante was sensitive on this point. At any rate, it is pretty clear that his immediate ancestors were not in any way distinguished. The very fact that he was born in Florence during a period when all the leading Guelfs were in exile shows that Alighiero was not considered by the dominant Ghibelines a person of too great importance to be allowed to remain undisturbed in the city.

Of Dante's boyhood and early youth we have only stray indications, and those mainly gathered from his own writings. We can, indeed, form a pretty

clear notion of what he *was*, but we know little enough about what he *did*. From a very early period he was made a hero of romance. Without going so far as some recent writers, both German and Italian, who seem to look upon every statement of early biographers with suspicion, while regarding their silence as good evidence that what they do not mention cannot have happened, we must admit that we cannot with certainty date any event in the first thirty years of Dante's life. Still, we can infer a good deal. He must unquestionably, during this time, have read a great deal, for it would have been impossible for a man wandering about from place to place, and intermittently busied in political affairs, to have amassed in seven or eight years the amount of learning which the *Commedia* by itself shows him to have possessed. He must have been recognised at an early age as a young man of marked ability. His intimacy with the old statesman Brunetto Latini, who died in 1294, and his friendship with Charles of Anjou's grandson, Carlo Martello, the young King of Hungary, who was at Florence in the same year and the following, are sufficient to prove this. Neither Brunetto, the most learned man of his age in Florence, and, as we should say, a man of "society" as well, nor a prince who, had he lived, would have been one of the most important personages in Europe, was likely to have distinguished with his friendship a young man of twenty-nine, not of the highest birth, unless he had already made himself notable for intellectual eminence.

One event occurred during Dante's youth, in which he is so generally believed to have borne a part, that it will probably come as a shock to many people to learn that this belief rests only on the statement of a writer who was not born till nearly fifty years after Dante's death. On St. Barnabas's day, June 11, 1289, the Florentine Guelfs met the Ghibelines of Arezzo, in whose ranks many of their own exiles were fighting, in a plain called Campaldino, belonging to the district of Certomondo, which lies in the Casentino, or upper part of the Arno valley. The Florentines gained a complete victory, though only after a hard fight, in which many of the chief Ghibeline leaders lost their lives. The event was one of great importance, and Villani recounts it in very full detail. Dante also refers to it in one of the best-known passages of the *Purgatory* (v. 92). It is quite possible that he himself may have taken part in the battle; but if he did so, it is somewhat strange that none of the earlier commentators, including his own son, nor any biographer of the fourteenth century, should have known of it, or, knowing of it, should have thought it worth recording; and that it should have been left to Leonardo Bruni of Arezzo, writing after the year 1400, to make the first reference to so noteworthy an incident in Dante's early career. Leonardo (whose "Life" will be found in Bianchi's edition of the *Commedia*) quotes,

indeed, a letter, said to have been written many years afterwards by Dante, in which reference is made to his presence in the battle; but this letter has long disappeared, and it is to be noted that the biographer does not even profess to have seen it himself. There is, it must be said, in the *Hell* (xxii. *init.*) one allusion to warlike operations in the Aretine territory of which Dante claims to have been an eye-witness; but as none of the early commentators seems to refer to Campaldino in connection with this passage, it tells, if anything, against the received story.

Another event, sometimes assigned to the period of Dante's life before his banishment, has somewhat more evidence in its favour. That he visited Paris at least once in the course of his life, the early authorities are agreed; but Villani, Boccaccio, and Benvenuto of Imola, all writing in the fourteenth century, make the visit to have taken place during his exile. It is not until we come to John of Serravalle, Lord of Fermo, who as Bishop of Rimini attended the Council of Constance, and there, at the request of the Bishops of Bath and Wells and Salisbury, prepared a Latin version of the *Commedia* with commentary, that we find mention of an earlier visit. His testimony is a little suspicious, because in the same sentence he also asserts that Dante studied at Oxford, a statement which, without strong confirmation, it would be very hard to accept. On the other side, it may be said that the silence of the older biographers is not conclusive evidence against the early study at Paris. Dante also went to Bologna, as it would appear, both before and after his banishment; yet while Villani and Boccaccio only name the latter visit, Benvenuto speaks only of the former. It is therefore quite possible that all three may have ignored the first period of study at Paris, or, if there was but one such period, may have assigned it to the wrong part of Dante's life. *Primâ facie* it is more probable that he would have undertaken both the long journey and the course of study in his days of "greater freedom and less responsibility," than when he was not only engaged upon the composition both of his great poem and of several prose treatises, but was taking an active share in political work.

Again, the allusion in the *Paradise* to the lectures of Sigier bears all the stamp of a personal reminiscence; just as the allusion to the dykes along the coast of Flanders to illustrate those which form the banks of the river Phlegethon, could hardly have occurred to one who had not seen them with his own eyes, though the biographers mention no journey to Flanders. But Sigier's lectures and his life too were over by 1300.

Another little bit of evidence may be given for what it is worth. Any one who has read the discourses of Meister Eckhart, the founder of the school of German

mystics, will be struck by the frequent and close resemblances, not of thought only, but of expression and illustration, which exist between him and Dante. So frequent and so close are these, that the reader can hardly conceive the possibility of their being due to mere coincidence. But Eckhart preached and wrote (if he wrote) in German, a language which we have no reason to think that Dante knew; so that the exchange of ideas between them, if any, must have taken place by word of mouth, and in French or Latin. Now, Eckhart was for a long time in Paris — so long that he seems to have been known as "Master Eckhart of Paris" — and left that city in 1302. If he and Dante ever met, it must have been in Paris (for though Eckhart went to Italy in 1302, it appears to have been only on a journey to Rome, the last place save Florence where Dante would then have cared to show himself), and that at some time before 1300.

Lastly, we may question if Dante would have chosen Paris as a place of residence while Philip the Fair was on the throne of France.

If, then, he did visit France before his exile, we can date the visit with some certainty. It can hardly have been before 1290, the year of Beatrice's death, nor after 1294, the year in which Carlo Martello came to Florence. Dante's marriage, again, in all probability took place somewhere about the latter year. We know nothing directly of Dante's doings in this interval; nothing, at any rate, inconsistent with his having been for some considerable period away from Florence.

But we have kept till the last the subject which to many is the only one associated with Dante's younger life. What, it will be said, about Beatrice? The fashionable theory nowadays seems to be that there undoubtedly was a lady at Florence of that name, the daughter of Folco Portinari, that she was married to Simone de' Bardi, a member of that great family who were Edward III.'s bankers, and that she died in the flower of her youth. But, say the modern Italian and German writers, this lady — Frau Bardi-Portinari, the latter call her — had no more to do with Dante than any other Beatrice in history. This will seem to many who do not realise on how slight a basis the identification of her rests, to be the very wantonness of paradox. These may be startled to learn that the whole story depends upon the veracity of one man, and that a professed writer of romantic fiction. It is from Boccaccio, and from him alone, that we have learnt to see in Dante's mystical guide and guardian, in the lost love of his early years, only the idealised and allegorised figure of Folco Portinari's daughter. What, then, is his evidence worth? To this we can only reply, that Boccaccio was born eight years before Dante's death; that he lived in Florence from his childhood; that he must have spoken with scores of people to whom the social and literary history of the years preceding 1290 was perfectly familiar; that both Dante and

the husband of Beatrice were prominent men; and that Boccaccio can have had no motive for making a statement which, if untrue, he must have known to be so. Further, if the statement had been untrue, it would surely have been contradicted, and some trace of the contradiction would have been found. But, on the contrary, it seems to have been accepted from the first. It is repeated by Boccaccio's younger contemporary and disciple Benvenuto of Imola, who himself lived for some time in Florence, before all those who would be able from their own recollection to confirm or deny it would have passed away. And Benvenuto, it may be noted, though devoted to Boccaccio, was no mere student, but a shrewd and critical man of the world. Dante's son Pietro, indeed, says no word to show that Beatrice was anything but a symbol, and in this some of the other early commentators follow him. But this would prove too much. Whether she be rightly identified with Beatrice Portinari or not, it is impossible for any reader possessing the least knowledge of the human heart to see in the Beatrice of the *Commedia* a symbol merely. Not to mention that it would be quite contrary to Dante's practice thus to *invent* a personage for the sake of the symbol, it is absurd to suppose that the "ten years' thirst" which the sight of her relieves, "the eyes whence Love once took his weapons," and such-like expressions were intended primarily as references to a neglected study of theology or a previous devotion to a contemplative life. The omission, therefore, of the commentators who interested themselves mainly in the allegory to tell us about the real Beatrice cannot be used as evidence against her existence.

The first supporter of what may be called the "superior" view — namely that the whole story of Beatrice is purely allegorical — was one Giovanni Mario Filelfo, a writer of the fifteenth century, born more than a hundred years after Dante's death. As a rule, where his statements can be tested, they are incorrect; and on the whole his work appears to be a mass of unwarranted inferences from unverified assertions. It was not till recent times that his theory on the subject found any defenders.

We may, then, pretty safely continue in the old faith. After all, it explains more difficulties than it raises. No doubt if we cannot free ourselves from modern conceptions we shall be somewhat startled not only by the almost deification of Beatrice, but also by the frank revelation of Dante's passion, with which neither the fact of her having become another man's wife nor his own marriage seems in any way to interfere. It needs, however, but a very slight knowledge of the conditions of life in the thirteenth century to understand the position. As has been already pointed out, the notion of woman's love as a spur to noble living, "the maiden passion for a maid," was quite recent, and at its first growth was quite distinct from the love which finds its fulfilment in marriage.

Almost every young man of a literary or intellectual turn seems to have had his Egeria; and when we can identify her she is usually the wife of some one else.

CHAPTER IV.

FLORENTINE AFFAIRS TILL DANTE'S EXILE

In order to understand the extent to which Dante's life was influenced by the political circumstances of his age, it will be well to carry our survey of events somewhat further, with special reference to the affairs of Florence.

As we have seen, after frequent alternations of fortune, the city passed, within two years of Dante's birth, for good and all to the Guelf side. On St. Martin's Day, in November, 1266, Count Guido Novello and his German horse were driven out of the city by the burghers; and though in the January following a treaty of peace was made, and cemented by various marriages between members of the leading families on either side — an arrangement of which the chief result was to embitter party spirit among the Guelfs who had taken no share in it — anything like a lasting reconciliation was soon found to be out of the question. Charles of Anjou, moreover, fresh from his victory over Manfred, was by no means disposed to allow the beaten Ghibelines any chance of rallying. Negotiations were entered into between him and the Florentine Guelfs, and on Easter Day, 1267, Guy of Montfort (son of Sir Simon) entered the city at the head of eight hundred French cavalry. The Ghibelines did not venture to strike a blow, but departed on the day before his arrival. At Easter, says Villani, the crime was committed which first split the city into factions; and at Easter the descendants of the men who had committed the crime went into exile, never to return.

The same year saw a general rally of the north Italian states to the Guelf side, and before many months were out even Lombardy, where, says Villani, there was hardly any memory of the Guelfs, followed the stream. In Tuscany, Pisa and Siena alone held by the tradition — for it was little more — of allegiance to the Empire. The Florentine exiles betook themselves to those cities, and before long the spirits of the party had revived sufficiently to allow them to play what must have been felt to be their last stroke in the game. Profiting by the disaffection of certain Apulian and Sicilian barons (whom one may imagine to have found the gloomy discipline of Charles a poor exchange for the brilliancy and licence of Frederick's Court), they cast their eyes towards the last surviving representative of that Count Frederick who, some two hundred years before, had fixed his seat in the hill-fortress of Staufen. Conrad, or Corradino, as the Italians called him, grandson of Frederick II., was a lad of sixteen, still under the tutelage of his mother, the widow of Conrad IV. Germany seems to have been loyal to him, and

had it not been for the impatience of the Italian Ghibelines, he might well have looked forward to regaining, perhaps under more favourable auspices, the Empire which his predecessors had held. But the Tuscan nobles, smarting under defeat, could not wait; and in spite of his mother's opposition, they carried the boy off. Money was lacking; and of the ten thousand German horsemen who accompanied him across the Brenner, only three thousand five hundred went beyond Verona. He passed through Lombardy, however, without opposition, and with the aid of the Genoese fleet reached Pisa in May, 1268. The rising of the Apulian barons had compelled Charles to return hastily to his kingdom, and Conradin found his way clear to Siena. An action in the district of Arezzo resulted in the defeat and capture of Charles's "marshal," who had come out from Florence in pursuit, and the German force was able to enter Rome unmolested. There they received a reinforcement of eight hundred good Spanish cavalry under Don Henry, brother of the King of Castile, and, elated with success, pushed on to strike a decisive blow. They marched eastward to Tagliacozzo, just within the frontier of the Abruzzi, while Charles reached the same point by forced marches from Nocera. The armies met on St. Bartholomew's Eve, and at first everything seemed to go well for Conradin. The Spanish division defeated the Provençals, and the Germans crushed the French and Italians. But Charles had with him an experienced old knight, Alard de St. Valéry, by whose advice he held a picked force in reserve, concealed behind some rising ground. With this he now attacked the victorious Germans and Spaniards, who had got out of hand in the excitement of pursuit and plundering. They made a bold resistance, but discipline told in the end; they were utterly defeated and their leaders put to flight. Conradin and his immediate staff, comprising the Duke of Austria and some German and Italian nobles, made their way to Astura on the coast of the Campagna, and had succeeded in embarking when they were recognised by one of the Frangipani, who were the lords of the territory. Arrested by him and handed over to Charles, they were subjected to a form of trial, and beheaded in the market-place of Naples. This act has always been regarded as an indelible blot on Charles's record. Dante couples it with the alleged murder, by his order, of St. Thomas Aquinas; and it seems to have been felt even by members of the Guelf party as something, if one may so say, beyond the rules of the game. Pope Clement, according to Villani, blamed Charles severely; and the pious historian, for his own part, sees in the King's subsequent misfortunes the judgment of God upon his cruelty towards an innocent boy. The judge who pronounced the sentence was slain before Charles's very eyes by his son-in-law, Robert, son to the Count of Flanders, "and not a word was said, for Robert was great with the King, and it appeared to the King and to all the barons

that he had acted like a valiant gentleman." In Conradin the Hohenstaufen line came to an end, and therewith all *raison d'être* for the Ghibeline party. After this it became merely a turbulent faction, until the accession of Henry of Luxemburg; when Cæsar once more began to take interest in his Italian dominions.

It may be conceded that party rancour had much more to do with the bringing of Conradin into Italy than any conscientious adhesion to views such as those to which Dante afterwards gave utterance in the *De Monarchia*, or faith in the benefit which would accrue to the world from the rule of a single sovereign. But it shows the hold which the Empire still had on men's minds, that the Ghibeline chiefs should have preferred to take a boy from Germany as the figure-head of their cause, rather than seek a leader of more experience from among their fellow-countrymen. Nor does it seem to have entered any one's mind to look out of Germany for an Emperor. There were, indeed, at the very time, two rival Cæsars-elect in existence — Richard, Earl of Cornwall, and Alfonso, King of Castile, the former of whom his own countrymen, more in derision than respect, were wont to call "King of Almayne;" but clearly no Ghibeline cared to call upon either of them to "heal the wounds which were killing Italy." Later, when the long interregnum was brought to an end by the election of Rudolf of Hapsburg, even the Guelf Villani holds that if he had been willing to pass into Italy he would have been lord of it without opposition; but that astute prince no doubt found himself much better employed in converting a petty baronial line into one of the great houses of Germany, and ultimately of Europe, than in acting up to a titular dignity which brought its bearer more splendour than either wealth or ease. When he did send an Imperial Vicar into Tuscany in 1281 his chance was gone, and the emissary was glad to come to terms with the Florentines.

Thus, from the earliest time that Dante could remember, the Guelfs held an almost undisturbed supremacy throughout Tuscany. There was occasional fighting between Florence, as the head of the Guelf League, and Siena, or Pisa, as the case might be. The Sienese, though helped by Guido Novello and the Florentine exiles, and by some of the Spanish and German troops who had escaped from Tagliacozzo, were badly beaten at Colle di Val d'Elsa in 1269, and their commander, Provenzano Salvani (whom Dante afterwards met in Purgatory), taken and slain. In the following year this city too was purged of the Ghibeline taint, and a few Florentine citizens who were caught were, after a reference to Charles, duly beheaded. Pisa held out somewhat longer, and was able to expel its Guelfs in 1275, among them the famous Count Ugolino de' Gherardeschi, a member of the house of Donoratico, one of whose counts had been captured and killed with Conradin; but in a year's time a Florentine success brought them back. An effort made by Pope Gregory X. to reconcile the factions,

as he passed through Florence on his way to the Council of Lyons, bore little or no fruit, and, as a pendant to former excommunications of Emperors, the city was placed under interdict. When, a year and a half later, Gregory died at Arezzo, “by his death,” says Villani, “the Guelfs of Florence were greatly cheered, by reason of the ill will which he had towards them;” — an interesting remark, as showing that the Guelfs were not prepared to support the Holy See farther than their own interests as a party demanded.

The condition of Florence at this time cannot be better described than in Villani’s words. Writing of the year 1278, he says —

“In these times, the Guelf nobles of Florence, reposing from their foreign wars with victory and honour, and fattened upon the goods of the exiled Ghibelines, and by reason of their other gains, began, through pride and envy, to quarrel among themselves; whence came to pass in Florence more feuds and enmities between the citizens, with slayings and woundings. Among them all the greatest was the quarrel between the house of the Adimari of the one part, who were very great and powerful, and on the other side were the house of the Donati; in such wise that nearly the whole of the city took sides, and some held with one party and some with the other, whereby the city and the Guelf party were in great danger.”

We shall remember how, in Dante’s judgement also, pride, envy, and avarice were “the sparks that had set hearts on fire,” in Florence.

Once again the Pope, who was now Nicholas III., interfered; and once again representatives of the two great factions exchanged the kiss of peace before a Papal Legate, this time in front of “the Preaching Friars’ new church of New St. Mary’s, in Florence,” of which the Legate, Cardinal Latino, had but lately laid the first stone. The Ghibeline leaders were still kept out, but the rank and file returned. The feud of the Adimari and Donati was patched up for the time, whereby “the said Cardinal had much honour, and Florence remained a good time in a peaceful and good and tranquil state.”

Cardinal Latino had arranged for the government of Florence by a committee of fourteen “good men,” of whom eight were to be Guelfs and six Ghibelines. They were to hold office for two months. It marks the Cardinal as a man of some organizing capacity that his peace continued for four years, during which time Villani has next to nothing to relate about the affairs of his city. These were the years in which Dante was growing up to manhood. As a boy of thirteen he would doubtless have looked on at the scene in front of Santa Maria Novella; and during the next four peaceful years we may suppose that he would have begun to sit at the feet of the old statesman, diplomatist, and scholar Brunetto Latini, picking up from his lips the lore “how man becomes immortal.” We can picture

him too, where the boys and girls were gathered together, a silent and reserved lad, probably unpopular unless with one or two special friends, paying little heed to any of his companions save one girl of about his own age, whose movements he would follow, and for the sound of whose words, though never addressed to him, he would listen, with the speechless devotion which perhaps is only felt at sixteen or seventeen, and then only by natures which fortunately are exceptional in this world. “The child is father to the man;” and we can be pretty certain from what we know of the man Dante what the boy Dante must have been.

The tranquil period was disturbed in 1282. Pope Nicholas, who, whether guilty of Simony or not — and one fears that the case against him must have been strong, since not only Dante, but even Villani charges him with the offence — at least deserved the blessing pronounced on peacemakers, had died in the previous year at Viterbo, a town which, during this period, seems to have suited the Popes better than Rome as a place of residence. Charles, between whom and Nicholas no love had been lost, was resolved that the next Pope should not come from the powerful house of the Orsini, to a branch of which, the Guatani, the late Pontiff had belonged, and by an arrangement with the people of Viterbo, succeeded in getting the two most prominent clerical members of that house imprisoned. Thus he secured the election of a Frenchman, Simon of Brie, who, being a canon of Tours, took the name of Martin IV. His Papacy, though it lasted little more than three years, was eventful. He was elected in January, 1282, and on the following Easter Monday, March 30th, the people of Palermo, furious at the outrages of Charles’s French troops, rose and massacred every Frenchman upon whom they could lay hands. Charles’s efforts to recapture the island were baffled, chiefly owing to the hostility of Manfred’s son-in-law. King Peter of Aragon, also, with the help of his famous admiral, Roger of Loria, began about this time to prove a serious thorn in the side of the Angevin King. From the day of the “Sicilian Vespers,” fortune turned against Charles. His son was taken prisoner by Loria in 1284, his life being spared only at the entreaty of Peter’s wife, while he did not recover his liberty till 1289. The King himself died broken down with grief and disappointment, in the early days of 1285, and was followed a couple of months later by his creature, Martin IV., and, before the year was out, by his enemy, King Peter. It will be remembered that Peter and Charles were seen by Dante in the “Valley of Princes,” awaiting their entry into Purgatory, and singing their Compline hymn in friendly accord: Martin IV. being placed higher up the mountain, among the gluttonous.

At Florence the course of affairs was not much affected by the reverses which befell Charles. At the same time, these, and a success gained by Guy of Montefeltro over John of Appia, a French officer whom Martin had appointed

Count of Romagna, made the Guelf majority uneasy. Cardinal Latino's Constitution was abandoned, and a new form of government adopted. The trading-class resolved to get rid altogether of the representatives of feudal authority, weak as they had become, and to this end the Fourteen were abolished, and the chief power placed in the hands of the Priors of the Arts, or, as we should say, the Masters of the great trading guilds. The number of those guilds which contributed members to the governing body seems to have been gradually increased. At first only three — the Clothmakers, the Money-changers, and the Wool-dealers — were thus honoured; but by the end of the century, at least twelve, seven greater and five lesser arts, were included. The Priors, as the Fourteen had done, held office for two months only, and various devices were employed to prevent any house or any person from becoming dangerously powerful. Nobles, in order to qualify for office, had to join a guild; and as the nobles, or *grandi*, were more frequently on the Ghibeline side, this would yet further weaken that party.

Florence had now fairly entered upon a period of great prosperity. Her bankers lent money to kings; her trade extended all over Europe. Pisa, her most dangerous rival, had been utterly crushed by the Genoese in the great sea-fight off Meloria, with a slaughter which seems to have struck awe into the hearts even of the victors; and though she expelled her Guelfs four years later, in 1288, and, in 1291, under the brilliant leader Guy of Montefeltro, won some successes in the field, she was never again a power to be feared. Arezzo gave some trouble as a rendezvous for the banished Ghibelines; but the battle of Campaldino, in 1289, already referred to, broke her strength for a long time. Florence was thus free to attend to the arts of peace. The city walls were extended and new gates built; and several of the buildings, which to this day are among the glories of Florence, date from that period. Still, however, much of the old class-jealousy smouldered; and, as Machiavelli points out, all fear of the Ghibelines being removed, the powerful houses began to oppress the people. Giano della Bella, himself of noble family, casting in his lot with the commons, succeeded in carrying what were called the Ordinances of Justice, whereby, among other things, nobles were absolutely disqualified from taking any part in the government. A measure so oppressive as this was bound to bring about its own appeal, and, as a matter of fact, within two years from its promulgation, Giano was driven into exile, and the nobles were more turbulent than ever. It is at this time that the name of Corso Donati first comes into prominence.

Another event, which was to influence the destinies of Florence and of Dante, occurred shortly before Giano's overthrow. This was the election to the Papacy, in 1294, of Benedetto Guatani, known to history as Boniface VIII. The most

vigorous Pope who had held the office for several generations, he soon let it be known that he intended to revive all the claims which his predecessors, Gregory VII. and Innocent III., had made to temporal as well as spiritual supremacy. His first efforts were devoted to getting Tuscany into his hands, and to this end he seems to have intrigued freely with the leaders of both parties in Florence. In theory, of course, where all were Guelfs, the Pope ought to have had little trouble; but there were Guelfs and Guelfs, and it was not long before party differences were emphasised, and, so to say, crystallised, by party names. Curiously enough, these again appear first at Pistoia. A family feud there had led to two branches of the Cancellieri being distinguished as Black and White, and towards 1300 the names appear at Florence. The Donati headed the Black faction; their rivals, the Cerchi, the White. The latter represented the more orderly section of the community; the former reproduced all the worst features of the old Ghibeline aristocracy, though in the end it was the Whites who had to coalesce with the Ghibelines. At first, indeed, it would seem as if Boniface might have been willing to work with the Whites. He sent for Vieri de' Cerchi, the leader of that party, and tried to induce him to live peaceably with the other side. Vieri, for reasons which we can only conjecture, replied curtly that he had no quarrel with any one; and Boniface resorted to the old expedient of sending a Cardinal — Matthew of Acquasparta — to reconcile the factions.

We have now reached the critical year of Dante's life — that in which he held the office of Prior. But for the events of this and the next two years, it may be doubted whether the *Commedia* would ever have come into existence, at least in the form in which six centuries have studied and admired it. Henceforth Dante's own history, rather than that of his times, will be our chief subject.

CHAPTER V.

DANTE'S EXILE

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Dante's name begins to appear in public documents as taking a share in the business of the State. Thus he spoke in the "Council of the Hundred" on December 10, 1296, and in the following March, in opposition, it would seem, to a proposal of a grant to King Charles II. of Apulia. In May, 1299, he acted as ambassador from Florence to the neighbouring city of San Gemignano, the only one of all the numerous embassies ascribed to him by some biographers in which modern criticism will still allow us to believe. Finally, in 1300, probably from June 15th to August 15th, he served his term as Prior.

The Constitution of Florence at this time was somewhat complicated. It will be sufficient to say here that the government was carried on by a committee of six priors, who held office for two months only; and that in order to be eligible for the offices of State a man had to be enrolled in one of the twelve trading guilds known as Arts, of which seven ranked as "greater," five as "less." Dante belonged to one of the "greater arts," that of the *speziali*, "dealers in spices," which included the apothecaries and, as it is believed, the booksellers. The number of priors was so large, and their tenure of office so short, that the selection of any particular citizen would hardly imply more than that he was regarded as a man of good business capacity; but in 1300 public affairs in Florence were in such a critical state, that one may well suppose the citizens to have been especially careful in their choice. In the previous April an accusation had been brought by Lapo Salterelli (afterwards one of Dante's fellow-exiles, not held by him in much esteem), who then was Prior, against three citizens of Florence — Simon Gherardi, Noffo Quintavalle, and Cambio, son of Sesto, of conspiring against the State. The facts are somewhat obscure, but, as it appears that they were all connected with the Papal Court, and that Boniface made strong efforts to get the fine imposed on them remitted, we may conjecture that they had in some way abetted his scheme of "getting Tuscany into his hands." In a remarkable letter addressed to the Bishop of Florence, in which a good deal of the argument, and even some of the language, of Dante's *De Monarchia* is curiously paralleled, of course from the opposite point of view, the Pope requires the attendance before him of Lapo (whom he styles *vere lapis offensionis*) and the other accusers. As may be supposed, no notice was taken of this requisition, and the fines were duly enforced.

Boniface's letter is dated from Anagni, on May 15th. Before it was written, the first actual bloodshed in the feud between the Black and White parties had taken place. Some of the young Donati and Cerchi, with their respective friends, were in the Piazza di Santa Trinità on May 1st, looking on at a dance. Taunts were exchanged, blows followed, and "Ricoverino, son of Messer Ricovero de' Cerchi, by misadventure got his nose cut off his face." The leading Guelfs, seeing what a chance the split in their party would offer to the Ghibelines, sought the mediation of the Pope. Boniface was of course willing enough to interfere, and, as has been said, sent Matthew of Acquasparta, Cardinal of Ostia, a former General of the Franciscans, to Florence as peacemaker. He arrived just about the time when the new Priors, including, as we must suppose, Dante, were entering on office, and was received with great honour. But when it came to measures of pacification, he seems to have had nothing better to suggest than the selection of the Priors by lot, in place of their nomination (as had hitherto been the custom) by their predecessors and the chiefs of the guilds. "Those of the White party," says Villani, "who controlled the government of the country, through fear of losing their position, and of being hoodwinked by the Pope and the Legate through the reform aforesaid, took the worser counsel, and would not obey." So the familiar interdict was launched once more, and the Legate departed.

In the city, things went from bad to worse. At the funeral of a lady belonging to the Frescobaldi, a White family, in the following December, a bad brawl arose, in which the Cerchi had the worst of it. But when the Donati, emboldened by this success, attacked their rivals on the highway, the Commune took notice of it, and the assailants were imprisoned, in default of paying their fines. Some of the Cerchi were also fined, and, though able to pay, went to prison, apparently from motives of economy, contrary to Vieri's advice. Unluckily for them, the governor of the prison, one of their own faction, "an accursed Ser Neri degli Abati," a scion of a family which seems, if we may trust Dante's mention of some of its other members, to have made a "speciality" of treacherous behaviour, introduced into the prison fare a poisoned millet-pudding, whereof two of the Cerchi died, and two of the opposite party as well, "and no blood-feud came about for that" — probably because it was felt that the score was equal.

The Blacks now made a move. The "captains of the Guelf party," who, though holding no official position, seem to have exercised a sort of *imperium in imperio*, were on their side; and a meeting was held in Holy Trinity Church, at which it was resolved to send a deputation to Boniface, requesting him to take once again what seems to us — and indeed was — the fatal step of calling in

French aid. The stern prophecy which Dante puts into the mouth of Hugh Capet in Purgatory was to be fulfilled: —

"I see the time at hand That forth from France invites another Charles To make himself and kindred better known. Unarm'd he issues, saving with that lance Which the arch-traitor tilted with; and that He carries with so home a thrust, as rives The bowels of poor Florence."

We may probably date from this Dante's final severance from the Guelf party; and, at any rate, we may judge from it the real value of Guelf patriotism.

It must be remembered that the Black faction was still but a faction. The conspiracy leaked out, and popular indignation was aroused. The *Signoria* that is, the Priors, took action. Corso Donati and the other leaders were heavily fined, and this time the fines were paid. Probably they did not wish to taste Ser Neri degli Abati's cookery a second time. A good many of the junior members of the party were banished to Castello della Pieve; and at the same time, "to remove all jealousy," several of the White leaders were sent to Serezzano (which we now call Sarzana) — a weak and unlucky attempt at compromise. They were, indeed, soon allowed to return, their place of exile being unhealthy; so much so that one of them, Dante's most intimate friend, Guido Cavalcanti, died in the course of the winter from illness contracted there.

Cardinal Matthew seems not to have actually left Florence till after the beginning of 1301. We are told that among his other demands (probably made on this occasion), was one to the effect that Florence should furnish a hundred men-at-arms for the Pope's service; and that Dante, who, after his term of office as Prior, remained a member of the council, moved that nothing should be done in the matter. Indeed, in the scanty notices which we have of his doings in this critical period, he appears as the steady opponent of all outside interference in the affairs of Florence, whether by Pope or Frenchman. In the face of this it is hard to understand how the famous story of his having gone on an embassy to Rome— "If I stay, who goes? If I go, who stays?" — can ever have obtained credence. Some words like those he may well have used, in the magnificent self-consciousness which elsewhere made him boast of having formed a party by himself; but we cannot suppose that he would at any time in the course of 1301 have thus put his head into the lion's mouth. That Boniface was at the time of the supposed mission not at Rome but at Anagni is a minor detail.

If all the White party had possessed Dante's energy, Florence might have been saved. Vieri de' Cerchi had, indeed, as we have seen, spirit enough to tell the Pope in effect to mind his own business, and he was not devoid of shrewdness; but he seems to have been incapable of any sustained vigour in

action. The party as a whole were probably as corrupt as their rivals, and less astute— “an evil and foolish company,” as Dante afterwards called them by the mouth of Cacciaguida. Corso Donati, on the other hand, was a bold and reckless intriguer. He followed up the conspiracy of the Santa Trinità by hastening to the Papal Court, and inducing Boniface to send at once for Charles of Valois, brother of the French king, Philip the Fair. Charles obeyed the summons readily, in the hope, says Villani, of the Imperial crown. After a visit to the Pope at Anagni, he entered Florence on All Saints’ Day, 1301. All opposition on the part of the Whites was disarmed by the assurance that he came only as “peacemaker;” and a meeting, “at which I, the writer, was present,” was held in the Church of Santa Maria Novella. Charles, “with his own mouth, undertook and swore, and promised as a King’s son to maintain the city in peace and good estate; and incontinently by him and by his people the contrary was done.” Armed men were introduced; Corso Donati, though under sentence of banishment, entered with them, Vieri de’ Cerchi, in foolish confidence, forbidding his arrest. The populace, promptly seeing who were the masters, raised a shout of “Long live Lord Charles and the Baron” (the name given to Corso); and the city was given up for a week to burning and pillage. A second visit from the Cardinal of Acquasparta produced no result, save a momentary truce and another interdict. Throughout the early months of 1302, killings and slayings went on, Corso’s only son, among others, being mortally wounded in the act of murdering one of the Cerchi. Finally, one of the French knights, acting in the capacity which to this day is regarded as peculiarly suited to the French genius, that of *agent provocateur*, induced some of the White party, by offers of help, to form some kind of conspiracy against Charles’s person. This plot being duly reported, the conspirators fled on April 4th, some to Pisa, some to Arezzo, some to Pistoia, and joined the already exiled Ghibelines. They were condemned as rebels, and their houses destroyed. From this time the Whites and Ghibelines form one party.

Whether Dante actually went with them is a perplexing question which has never been thoroughly solved, but is of sufficient interest to delay us for a while. In the short biography of the poet which Villani gives when recording his death, we read: “This Dante was a citizen of Florence, honourable and of old family, belonging to the ward of St. Peter’s Gate, and a neighbour of ours. His exile from Florence was for the reason that when Lord Charles of Valois, of the house of France, came to Florence in 1301 and drove out the White party, as is mentioned above under the date, the said Dante was one of the chief governors of our city, and belonged to that party, Guelf though he was; and therefore, *for no other fault*, he was driven forth and banished with the said White party from

Florence." This seems very explicit, but there are difficulties in the way of taking it quite literally. A document exists, dated January 27, 1302, in which the Podestà, Cante de' Gabrielli of Gubbio, charges Dante Alighieri and three others with various offences, the chief being *baratteria* (or corrupt jobbery in office), the use of public money to resist the entrance of Charles of Valois, and interference in the affairs of Pistoia with the view of securing the expulsion from that city "of those who are called Blacks, faithful, men devoted to the Holy Roman Church," which had taken place in May, 1301. It is stated that, having been duly summoned, they had contumaciously absented themselves, which seems to show that they were not in Florence; and they are sentenced to pay five thousand florins apiece within three days, or, in default, be banished and have their houses destroyed and their goods confiscated; and in any case they were banished for two years. A second decree of March 10th condemns Dante and fourteen others, among them Lapo Salterelli, if they fall into the power of the Commonwealth, to be burnt to death.

As has been said, Dante must clearly have been out of Florence when this document was launched. Leonardi Bruni says he was at Rome on an embassy when the Whites left Florence, and that he hastened to join his party at Siena; but for the reasons already given, this story of the embassy cannot be accepted. Some have suggested that as at Florence the old style prevailed, under which March 26th was New Year's Day, the two sentences really belong to what we should now call 1303, when Dante had undoubtedly been in exile for some months, and this is corroborated by Benvenuto's statement, "bannitus fuit anno MCCCIII."— "bannitus" meaning, no doubt, "placed under ban," as distinct from voluntary exile. But it appears that Cante de' Gabrielli went out of office in June, 1302. So, unless we can suppose this last date to be wrong — and there is some little ground for suspecting it — we must assume that, though a Florentine official, he did not use Florentine style, and that Dante, with some few others of the leading White Guelfs, was compelled to fly sooner than the bulk of his party. He may very well have been regarded as a specially dangerous opponent.

That there was any foundation for the charge of corruption it is impossible to believe. Dante's faults were many, but they did not lie in that direction; and the honest Villani, though he appears to have sided with the Black party, and indeed held office himself as Prior only a few years later, seems to have introduced the words which we have italicised in the passage given above, with the express intention of indicating this. On the other hand, it may be noted that the charge was ingeniously devised. Dante is known to have been in debt, for some of his notes-of-hand exist, belonging to the years preceding 1300; while in the course of 1301 he was engaged in superintending the performance of certain public

works in the city. Thus it would be matter of common knowledge both that he was short of money and that he had recently been in a position offering good opportunities for peculation, a fact of which his unscrupulous adversaries would naturally avail themselves. We may perhaps see, in the large space which he devotes, in the *Hell*, to the crime of *baratteria*, evidence of a wish to express his especial detestation of it.

What, however, we know for certain is that, after some date early in the year 1302, Dante never saw Florence again. Several attempts were made by the exiles to win their way back, but they were uniformly unsuccessful, and only led to fresh sentences against those who took part in them. Whether Dante was among these, at all events during the earlier years of his exile, seems very doubtful. We know from his own words that he had no sympathy with the men with whom he was thrown. Indeed, it was a curious irony of fate which linked in one condemnation his name and that of Lapo Salterelli, a man whom he selects (*Par.*, xv. 128) as an example of the degradation into which the Florentine character had fallen. During this first period he was probably eating his heart, and watching for the coming of the deliverer who, by bringing all the world under one impartial sway, should put an end to faction and self-seeking — the *invidia* and *avarizia* against which he is for ever inveighing — and permit every man "to sit at ease and perfect himself in prudence and wisdom;" thus fulfilling his proper task of "making himself immortal," or, as St. Paul phrases it, coming "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is a noble conception, though the six hundred years which have elapsed since Dante looked for its fulfilment do not seem to have brought us very much more forward in that direction. Still, we can give him the honour due to a lofty standard of political and social conduct in a violent and profligate, if brilliant, age; and we can still read with interest and profit that wonderful repertory of political wisdom, dialectical argument (after the manner of the schoolmen), and passionate pleading for good government, which he calls the *Treatise on Monarchy*.

The date at which the *De Monarchia* was composed is uncertain, but it would seem to belong most fitly to the years which immediately succeeded Dante's banishment. The Empire was in the hands of the incapable Albert of Hapsburg while the Pope, from 1305, was the creature of the French King. Cæsar and Peter seemed both alike to have abdicated, and the world was going from bad to worse. With the election of Henry of Luxemburg, in 1308, better times may seem to have dawned, when practice might supersede abstract theories. The letter which Dante actually wrote to Henry in 1311 is couched in a far less meditative tone.

During Henry's short reign the Ghibeline cause looked up; nor was his death in 1313 so fatal a blow to it as might have been expected. Several powerful leaders arose, one of whom, Uguccione della Faggiuola of Pisa, won back most of Tuscany for his party. In 1315 he inflicted a severe defeat on the Florentines and their allies at Montecatini, on the border of the Florentine and Lucchese territories; but he was unable to follow up his success so far as to enter the city. Some two months later a third sentence went forth against Dante, in which his sons were included, condemning them, as Ghibelines and rebels against the Commonwealth and people of Florence and the statutes of the Guelf party, to be beheaded whenever taken. It has been plausibly suggested that the two events were not unconnected; and as it is hardly likely that at the age of fifty Dante would have taken a prominent part in the actual fighting, we must suppose it to have been as a leading adviser of the enemy that he was specially obnoxious to the ruling powers at Florence.

The chief importance, however, which Dante's exile has for us, is that with it his great literary activity began. He had, of course, written all his life; and it is quite possible even that some portion of the *Commedia* had been composed before he left Florence. The story told by Boccaccio is well known. Commenting upon the opening words of Canto viii., he tells us that the preceding portion of the poem had been written before the final catastrophe, and left behind by Dante in his flight, not being discovered for some years. In any case, the *Vita Nuova* was written, as he himself tells us, before he was twenty-five; and a good deal of the *Convito*, a work which looks very much as if it had first come into existence as the contents of notebooks, in which materials to be afterwards worked into the great poem were jotted down, was no doubt in writing. But it is to Dante's twenty years of exile that we owe in their completed form the works which place him not only among the world's five or six greatest poets, but in an eminent position among philosophers, theologians, statesmen, and men of science.

We have but little certain information as to Dante's life during his exile. Legends innumerable have sprung up as to his residence here, there, and elsewhere; but most of these are based on the fancies of later writers; or in some cases even on local vanity, which was flattered by the remotest connection with the great name. We can say for certain that he passed some time at Verona, some at Lucca, some at Ravenna, where his sepulchre remains to this day; and with some approach to probability we can place him at Paris, at Bologna, and perhaps at Milan. He may possibly have spent some time in the Lunigiana, and some in the Casentino. All we know is that his life was spent in wandering, that he had no settled home, that he lived on other men's bread, and went up and down other men's stairs. He was honoured, it is true. Great nobles were glad to employ his

services, and, as we have said, the fact of his being so often selected by the rulers of Florence for condemnation, shows that at least they regarded him as a man to be reckoned with. But probably the strongest evidence of the estimation in which he was held is to be found in Villani's obituary chapter, wherein his character and accomplishments are set forth with a fulness which the historian elsewhere reserves for Popes and sovereigns; a fulness all the more noteworthy since his name never occurs in the chronicle of events in which he undoubtedly took a leading part.

Only when Italy and Florence had lost him beyond hope of recovery was it realised that he was one of his country's greatest glories. Then chairs were founded from which the most eminent literary men of the age should expound his works; and commentator after commentator — nine or ten before the end of the fourteenth century — cleared up some obscurities and made others more obscure. Of course, so far as historical allusions go, the writers who were nearly or quite contemporary with the events are often of great service; but it is otherwise, as a rule, when a knowledge of books is wanted. We are never so much impressed with the vastness of Dante's reading, as when we see the utter failure of these learned men even to observe, in many cases, that any explanation or illustration of an allusion is wanted. This, however, brings us back to the point from which we started, namely, that much as has been written about Dante, the possible fields of research are by no means exhausted.

The interest of the events which moulded Dante's career and influenced his work has perhaps led to their occupying too large a share of these pages; but it has been thought best to go into the history at some length, as being after all the first and most essential step towards a thorough comprehension of the position which his writings, and especially the *Commedia*, hold in European literature. This is quite unique of its kind. Never before or since has a poem of the highest imagination served — not merely as a political manifesto, but — as a party pamphlet; and we may safely say that no such poem will in future serve that purpose, at all events until the conditions under which it was produced occur. Whether that is ever likely to be the case, those who have followed the history may judge.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "COMMEDIA"

So many good summaries of the *Commedia* exist that to give another may appear superfluous. At the same time, experience shows not only that such a summary is found by most readers to be the best of all helps to the study of the poem, but also that every fresh summariser treats it from a somewhat different point of view. It is therefore possible that in the following pages answers, or at least suggestions of answers, may be found to some questions which previous writers, in England at all events, have passed over; and that they may serve in some measure as a supplement to the works which will be mentioned in the appendix.

§ 1. Hell.

The first eleven cantos of the *Hell* form a very distinct subdivision of the poem. They embrace, first, the introduction contained in Canto i.; secondly, the description of the place of punishment up to a point at which a marked change in the character of the sins punished is indicated. In one sense, no doubt, an important stage in the journey is completed when the City of Dis is reached, in Canto viii.; but it will be observed, when we reach that point, that the class of sinners who are met with immediately within the walls of the City, the Epicureans or, as we should now say, the Materialists, bear really a much stronger affinity to those who are outside the walls, those whose sin has been lack of self-restraint in one form or another, than they do to the worse criminals who have "offended of malicious wickedness," and who lie at and below the foot of the steep guarded by the Minotaur. The former class at all events have been, to use a common phrase, "their own worst enemies;" their sins have not been, at any rate in their essence, like those of the latter, of the kind which break up the fabric of society, and with them the heretics may most naturally be considered. It can hardly be doubted that some such view as this led Dante to make the first great break of level in his scheme of the lower world at a point which would leave the freethinkers and materialists actually nearer to the sinners of whom he holds that their sin "men Dio offende," even though theological exigencies compel him to place them within the walls of the "red-hot city." We may thus conveniently take these eleven cantos for consideration as a group by themselves.

In the earlier cantos, as indeed throughout the poem, the main difficulties with which we meet depend far more on interpretation than on the mere "construing" of the words; and even if it were otherwise, all purely linguistic difficulties have been so fully dealt with over and over again in commentaries and translations that it would, as has been said, be quite superfluous to enter here upon any discussion of them. The opening canto, as every reader will at once perceive, is symbolism and allegory from beginning to end, from the "dark wood" in which the action of the poem begins to the "hound" who is to free Italy. These, more especially the latter, have given as much trouble to the interpreter as anything in the whole poem; indeed it may be said that in the matter of the *Veltro* we have not made much advance on Boccaccio, who frankly admitted that he could not tell what was meant. But between these two points we have some hundred lines in nearly every one of which, beside its obvious and literal interpretation, we must look for all the others enumerated by Dante in the famous passage of his letter to Can Grande. The second canto is of much the same character, in some respects almost in more need of close study. The significance of the three beasts who hinder Dante is easier to make out than that of the three heavenly ladies who assist him. Meantime, if we are content to read the poem as narrative merely, there is no great difficulty to be overcome. The language is straightforward on the whole, almost the only *crux* being ii. 108, which has not yet been satisfactorily explained, nor is the imagery other than simple.

With Canto iii. and the arrival within the actual portal of Hell (though hardly in Hell properly so called) we enter upon a fresh subdivision of the poem; and are very soon brought up by the first, and one of the most perplexing, of the allusions to contemporary history with which it abounds. The elucidation of these would constantly offer almost hopeless difficulties, were it not for the early commentators, who are often able to explain them from personal knowledge. Now and then, however, it happens that they differ, and then the modern student is at a loss. This has been in some measure the case with the famous "gran rifiuto," iii. 60; so that while we may with a high degree of probability accept the more usual view that the allusion is to the abdication of Celestine V., we cannot without further evidence feel so certain about it as we could wish. The whole conception of this canto seems to be due to Dante's own invention; only to a nature like his, keenly alive to the eternal distinction between right and wrong, and burning with zeal in the cause of right, could it have occurred to mark off for special ignominy people whose sole fault seems to have been that they "took things too easily." When, in Canto iv., we pass the river of Acheron, and find ourselves for the first time actually on the border of Hell itself, we are conscious

at first of an alleviation. Melancholy there is, but it is a dignified melancholy, as different from the sordid misery of the wretches we have just left, as the “noble city” and the green sward enclosed by it are different from the murky air and the foul mud among which they have to dwell. Both in this and in the second circle we have punishment indeed but without degradation, even with some mitigation. Virgil at least enjoys the converse of the sages and great men of old and, in so far as non-Christians go, of recent times; while Francesca is solaced by the perpetual companionship of him for whose sake she has lost her soul. Even the penalty which she suffers, of being whirled for ever on the storm, is not exactly humiliating. From this point, however, we are conscious of a change. The gluttons seated or lying on putrid earth and exposed to lashing rain; the misusers of wealth, with all human lineaments effaced, and engaged in a foolish and wearisome scuffle; the ill-tempered, floating on the surface of the foul marsh of Styx or lying submerged in it according as their disposition was to fierce wrath or sullen brooding — all these are not merely tormented but degraded as well.

After crossing the Styx (Canto viii.) we find a further change. Thus far the sins punished have differed only in degree from those which we shall find being expiated in Purgatory. They are indeed the simpler forms, so to speak, of the defects common to all animal nature. They are the same which, in one of their interpretations, the three symbolical beasts of Canto i. denote. Henceforth we find sins which are only possible to the higher intelligence of humanity. It will be observed, too, that at this point what may be called pictorial description begins. Hitherto we have had merely a general impression of murky air and miry soil, sloping perhaps a little toward the centre, and intersected now and again by a stream. Now the City of Dis with minarets and towers rises in front of us, and, as we shall see in future cantos, from this time onwards the character of the scenery is indicated with great preciseness, even to its smallest details. Here, too, actual devils, beings whose will, as Aquinas says, is obstinately set upon evil, appear for the first time, as distinct from the personages of classical mythology, who act as warders of the various circles. Virgil, or human reason, is no longer sufficient of himself to secure a passage. Both at the gates of the fiery city and on subsequent occasions he is as helpless, without superior aid, as his disciple and follower.

The ninth canto contains a piece of allegory, that involved in the introduction of Medusa and the Furies, which has earned perhaps a greater reputation for obscurity than it deserves, from the fact that Dante himself calls special attention to it.

Cantos x. and xi. are both very important, the former for its bearing on the history of Florence. Those who have read the sketch of that history in the

preceding chapters will understand the full force of Farinata's discourse with Dante. We have had a brief passage of the same kind in Canto vi., but here the subject is treated at greater length, and with some marvellous dramatic touches.

Canto xi. must be thoroughly mastered if Dante's scheme of ethics is to be understood. It forms, indeed, a summary of and key to the arrangement of the penalties, and a thorough comprehension and retention of it in the memory will be found a wonderful help to a recollection of the whole Cantica.

At the conclusion of the discourse in which Dante, speaking by the mouth of Virgil, has set forth this ethical system, the poets move forward along the brink of the pit until they arrive at a spot where they can reach the lower level. The descent is rendered possible by a steep and broken slope of loose rock, which Dante compares to the great landslip between Trent and Verona, known as the Slavino di Marco. Virgil explains that this was due to the "rending of the rocks" at the time of the Crucifixion. The descent is guarded by the legendary Minotaur, the Cretan monster, part bull, part man. In this connection it may be noticed that the beings suggested by classical mythology, who are met with in the division of Hell which lies between the wall of the City of Dis and the brink of Malebolge, the Minotaur, the Centaurs, the Harpies, and Geryon (as Dante conceives him), all belong to the semi-bestial class. In spite of the opinion held by some of the most eminent Dante-scholars, that Dante in his classification of sins does not follow Aristotle's grouping of them into incontinent, malicious, and brutal, but recognises the first two only, it seems difficult not to see in this, especially when it is taken in connection with expressions scattered throughout his writings, an indication that in the sins of the seventh circle he found the equivalent of the Greek philosopher's θηριότης — the result of giving a free range to the brutal, as distinct from the common animal, impulses.

In this seventh circle, too, we first meet with *fire* as an instrument of Divine wrath. Indeed, with the single exception of the suicides, for whom a specially significant chastisement is devised, all the sinners in this group, from the heretics in their red-hot tombs to the usurers tormented on one side by the fiery rain, and on the other by the exhalations from the deeper pit, are punished by means of heat. At the foot of the slope is a great circular plain, ringed with a river of boiling blood in which spoilers, robbers, and murderers, some famous, some obscure, are plunged more or less deeply in proportion to the heinousness of their crimes; for, like earthly streams, this has its deep and shallow. At the latter point they cross, on the back of Nessus the Centaur, and at once enter (Canto xiii.) a wood of gnarled and sere trees, in which the Harpies have their dwelling. These trees have sprung from the souls of suicides, and retain the power of speech and sensation. From one of these, who in life had been the famous

statesman Peter de Vineis, Dante learns that at the judgement they will recover their bodies, like others, but will not be allowed to reassume them. The body will be hung on the tree to which it belongs. Here, as in the case of the avaricious and the wrathful, the spirits of other sinners take a part in the infliction of the punishment. The wood is inhabited by the souls of those who had wasted their substance in life, and these are constantly chased through it by hounds, with much destruction of leaves and twigs.

On issuing from the wood (Canto xiv.), they find themselves at the edge of a great circular plain of sand, upon which flakes of fire are ceaselessly dropping. Skirting the wood for some distance they reach the bank of the stream of blood which, having circled all round the outer margin of the wood, now comes flowing through it, and crosses the sandy plain in a channel carefully built of shaped stone. Virgil takes occasion to explain the origin of the rivers of Hell. Thick fumes rise from it which quench the falling flames, so that along its bank, and there only, can a way be found. As they proceed they find sinners lying prone or running under the fiery shower. These are they who had done violence to God, either directly by open blasphemy, or indirectly by violating the divinely appointed natural order whereby both the race of mankind and its possessions should increase and multiply. Many famous Florentines are among these sinners (Cantos xv. and xvi.); and Dante talks long with the famous statesman and philosopher, Brunetto Latini, who had been his early friend and adviser, and with sundry great captains and men of renown. After this they reach the point where the river falls with a mighty roar down to the next level. There is no natural means of descent here available; and Dante hands to Virgil a cord with which he is girt. The meaning of this cord is very obscure. He says: “I once thought to capture the leopard with it;” and if the leopard denotes the factions of Florence, the cord may perhaps symbolise justice or equity. When Virgil has thrown it down they wait a short time, and presently a monster appears whose name we find to be Geryon, and who symbolises fraud or treachery. It is perhaps not unnatural that when the power to enforce justice has been cast away, treachery should raise its head. This monster draws near the brink (Canto xvii.), but before they mount on him, Virgil allows Dante to walk a few paces to the right, in order that he may take note of the last class of “violent” sinners, namely, the usurers. These hold an intermediate position between the violent and the treacherous; just as the heretics did between the incontinent and the violent. Here again are many Florentines. Like the other misusers of money in Canto vii. their features are unrecognisable, and they are only to be known by the arms embroidered on their money bags. After hearing a few words from one of them, Dante returns to Virgil, and both take their place on the croup of Geryon, who

bears them downwards to the eighth circle. This (Canto xviii.), from its configuration, is known as Malebolge, or Evilpits. It is divided into ten concentric rings, or circular trenches, separated by a tract of rocky ground. From various indications we gather that each trench is half a mile across, and the intervening ground a mile and a quarter. The trenches are spanned by rocky ribs, forming bridges by which the central cavity can be reached. Here we find for the first time devils, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, employed as tormentors. The sinners in this circle are those who have been guilty in any way of leading others into sin, deceiving or cheating them, without any aggravating circumstances of ingratitude or breach of natural ties. In the first pit are those who have led women astray; these are scourged by fiends. In the next lie flatterers immersed in the most loathsome filth. In each Dante notes two examples: one of recent times — indeed, in both cases an acquaintance of his own, — and one taken from ancient history or legend. Jason, for his desertion of Hypsipyle and Medea, is the classical example of the first offence. Of this use of mythological persons we have many examples, but the typical flatterer of old time is a more curious selection, being a character in a play, whom Dante has borrowed from Cicero.

In the next, or third pit (Canto xix.), we again find fire as the instrument with which the sinners are punished. Those who have made money by misuse of sacred offices are buried head downwards in holes with their feet projecting, and fire plays about their soles. Naturally an opportunity is here presented for some strong invective against the recent unworthy occupants of the See of Rome.

Canto xx. brings us to the fourth pit, in which those who have professed to foretell the future march in a dismal procession with their heads turned round so that they look down their own backs. The sight of Manto, daughter of Tiresias, suggests a description of the origin of the city of Mantua. The last lines of this canto contain one of the most important indications of time which Dante gives in this part of the poem.

The sinners of the fifth pit correspond in some degree with those of the third, except that in their case the traffic which is punished has to do with secular offices. Canto xxi. opens with the famous description of the work in the arsenal of Venice, which is introduced in order to afford an image of the boiling pitch in which sinners of this class are immersed. For some reason, which is not very clear, Dante devotes two whole cantos to this subdivision of the subject. There is no doubt that *baratteria*, peculation or jobbery, was rampant throughout Southern Europe at the time, and, as has been said, it was one of the charges brought against the poet himself at the time of his banishment. We find here again one of “the torments of heat;” with one exception, that of the evil

counsellors in Canto xxv., the last instance in which heat plays a part. It would be interesting, by comparison of the various sins into the punishment of which it enters, to see if any ground can be suggested for its employment in their case.

Cantos xxi. and xxii. are also noteworthy as bringing into prominence the agency of devils, and showing them actually at work. Ten are introduced and named; and some indication is given of their organisation. Dante's skill is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the way in which he has surmounted the difficulty of depicting beings in whom there is no touch of any good quality. They are plausible; and their leader, Malacoda, appears at first sight almost friendly. It is not until later that his apparent friendliness turns out to be a deliberate attempt to mislead.

At the opening of Canto xxiii. we find the poets exactly half-way through Malebolge, on the rocky table-land, so to call it, which separates the fifth and sixth pits. They are quite solitary, for the first time in the course of their journey out of sight and hearing of any other beings; but still in fear of pursuit from the fiends whom they have just left. These do not, however, come up until just as the poets have begun the descent into the sixth pit, and here their power is at an end.

In this pit are punished the hypocrites, who go in slow procession clad in cowls of gilded lead. Contrary to the usual practice the poets have in this case to descend to the bottom of the pit, the bridges being all broken away. Malacoda, the leader of the fiends in the last *bolgia*, had mentioned one, but (falsely) assured them that they would find a sound one further on. He also informed them that the destruction of the bridges had taken place 1266 years ago on the previous day, but five hours later than the time of speaking. This gives an important "time-reference." There can be no doubt that the allusion is to the rending of the rocks at the moment of Our Lord's death (*cf.* xii. 31-45), which took place at 3 p.m., so that we have 10 a.m. on Easter Eve fixed as the hour at which the poets meet with the devils of the fifth pit. Among the hypocrites Dante talks with two men who had jointly held the office of *Podestà*, or chief magistrate, at Florence in the year after his birth. They belonged to opposite parties, and the double appointment had been one of the many expedients devised to restore peace; but it had not answered, and the two were suspected of having sunk their own differences of opinion, not to conciliate the factions, but to enrich themselves at the expense of the State. While talking to them Dante sees a figure fastened to the ground with three stakes, as though crucified. This, it is explained, is Caiaphas; Annas being similarly placed at another point of the circle. Dante and Virgil have to leave this pit as they entered it, by climbing over the rocks (Canto xxiv.); and from the minuteness with which this process is described (even to so characteristic a touch as "I talked as I went, to show that

my wind was good,") it has been thought that Dante was not without experience in mountain-craft.

The seventh pit is appointed for the punishment of thieves. Serpents and dragons are here introduced. In some cases the body is reduced to ashes in consequence of the bite, and presently recovers its shape; in others man and serpent blend; in others, again, they exchange natures, the sinners themselves being transmuted into the reptiles, and becoming the instruments of torment to their fellows. A kind of reckless and brutal joviality seems to characterise the malefactors whom we meet with in this region. Among them are many Florentines, a fact which prompts Dante to an apostrophe full of bitter irony, with which Canto xxvi. opens. In the following pit a curious change of tone is manifest. The image chosen to illustrate the scene is an agreeable one — fireflies flitting in summer about a mountain valley; and the punishment though terrible is in no way loathsome or degrading, like most of those which have hitherto been described in the present circle. The sinners, too, who are mentioned are men who on earth had played heroic parts; the manner of their speech is dignified, and Dante treats them with respect. They are those who have sinned by giving wicked counsel to others, and so leading them to commit sin; and the two who are especially distinguished and who relate their stories at length are Ulysses (Canto xxvi.) and Count Guy of Montefeltro, a great Ghibeline leader (xxvii.). The former probably owes his place here to Virgil's epithet *scelerum inventor*, deviser of crimes. In a passage which has deservedly become famous, he gratifies Dante's curiosity as to the manner of his end. The passage, apart from its poetic beauty, is remarkable as being, so far as can be traced, due entirely to the poet's own invention. At all events, beyond two or three words in the *Odyssey*, nothing in either classical or mediæval legend is known which can have given the suggestion for it. In the case of the Count of Montefeltro, who is alleged to have given treacherous counsel to Boniface VIII., it also appears difficult to understand how the facts, if facts they are, became known to Dante. Villani no doubt gives the story, but in language so similar to that of the poem that a suspicion arises whether he may not be relying on it as his authority.

The next canto (xxviii.) introduces us to one of Dante's most ghastly conceptions. The ninth pit is peopled by those who have on earth caused strife and divisions among mankind. They are not, as often stated, schismatics in the technical sense of the word. Mahommed and Ali are there, obviously not on religious grounds however, but as having brought about a great breach between divisions of the human race; and though Fra Dolcino, who is introduced as it were by anticipation, was a religious schismatic, it was no doubt his social heterodoxy which earned him a commemoration in this place. The punishment

of these sinners is appropriate. They are constantly being slashed to pieces by demons; the wounds being closed again before they complete the circuit. Curio, who as Lucan narrates, spoke the words which finally decided Cæsar to enter upon civil war, Mosca de' Lamberti, the instigator of the crime which first imported especial bitterness into the strife of factions at Florence, and one Peter of Medicina, who seems to have devoted himself to keeping party-spirit alive in Romagna, are here. Last of all, carrying his own head like a lantern, is Bertrand of Born, the famous troubadour, who is charged with having promoted the quarrel between Henry II. of England and his son. It is worth noting that at this point we get the first definite indication of the dimensions which Dante assumes for the present division of Hell. We are told that this ninth pit of Malebolge has a circumference of twenty-two miles. From the next canto we learn that the last or innermost pit has half this measure; and from this basis it has been found possible to draw an accurate plan of Malebolge, and to conjecture, with an approach to certainty, the conception formed by Dante of Hell generally.

In the last pit (Cantos xxix. and xxx.) are found those who have been guilty of personation with criminal intent, or of bearing false witness, or of debasing the coinage or pretending to transmute metals. These suffer from leprosy, dropsy, raving madness, and other diseases. Before leaving the pit, a quarrel between two of the sinners attracts Dante's attention more than Virgil thinks seemly; and a sharp reprimand follows. Dante's penitence however earns speedy forgiveness.

We are now drawing near the lowest pit; and through the dim air is heard the sound of a great horn (Canto xxxi.) Going forward, they find that the final descent, which appears to be a sheer drop of about thirty-five feet, is guarded by a ring of giants. Those of them who are seen are Nimrod, and the classical Ephialtes and Antæus; but we learn that others famous in Greek mythology are there also. Antæus being addressed by Virgil in courteous words, lifts the poets down the wall and lands them on the lowest floor of Hell. This (Canto xxxii.) is of ice, and must be conceived as a circular plain, perhaps about two miles in diameter. In this are punished all who have been guilty of any treachery towards those to whom they were bound by special ties of kindred, fellow-citizenship, friendship, or gratitude. Each of these various grades of crime has its own division, and these are arranged concentrically, with no very definite boundaries between the different classes. At the same time each division has its appropriate name, formed from some famous malefactor who had specially exemplified that class of crime. Thus the first ring is Caina; the second, Antenora, from Antenor, who, according to a late version of the Trojan legend, had betrayed Troy to the Greeks; the third, Toommea, from that Ptolemy, son of Abubus, who treacherously slew the Maccabees at a feast; the last, in which Lucifer himself

abides, is Giudecca. No distinction appears to exist between the penalties inflicted on the two first classes; all are alike plunged up to the shoulders in the ice, the head being free. Dante speaks with more than one, most of them persons who had belonged to the Ghibeline party; though in the case of one, Bocca degli Abati, the treachery had been committed to the detriment of the Guelfs. The mention of Bocca and Dante's behaviour to him, may remind us that the whole question of Dante's demeanour towards the persons whom he meets in the first part of the poem is interesting. For some he is full of pity, towards some he is even respectful; occasionally he is neutral; while in some cases he displays anger and scorn, amounting as here to positive cruelty. The expressions of pity, it will be observed, practically cease from the moment that Malebolge, the "nethermost Hell," is reached. Similarly, after reaching the City of Dis, the tone of Virgil towards the guardians of the damned, which up to that point has been peremptory, becomes almost suppliant. The reason for this is indeed somewhat obscure: one does not at once see why the formula "So it is willed there, where will is power," should not be as good for the Furies or for Malacoda as it has proved for Charon and Minos. Perhaps the clue is to be found in the fact that the sins punished *inside* the walls of the city (sins which, it will be seen, are not represented in Purgatory at all) are to be regarded as the result of a will obstinately set against the will of God; while the sins arising from the frailty of human nature may be checked by the "right judgement" recalling, before it is too late, what the will of God is. This, however, is a different question, and we must not here pursue it too far. To revert to that of Dante's various demeanour, it will be seen that, with the limitation indicated above, his sympathy with the sinner does not vary with the comparative heinousness of the sin. Almost his bitterest scorn, indeed, is directed towards some whose chief sin is lack of any positive qualities, good or bad. One infers that he would almost rather wander in a flame with Ulysses, or lie in the ice with Ugolino, than undergo the milder punishment of Celestine and his ignoble companions. For the simply self-indulgent, Francesca or Ciacco, he has pity in abundance; Farinata, Brunetto, and the other famous men who share the fates of these, may probably come into the same category. In such cases as these, while he has not a word to say against the justice of God, he has no desire to add "the wrath of man" thereto. In the one instance in Malebolge where he shows any sympathy (and is reproved by Virgil for doing so) it is for the soothsayers, whose sin would not necessarily involve the hurt of others. But his conduct is very different to those whose sin has been primarily against their fellow-man, or against kindly human intercourse. His first fierce outbreak is against the swaggering ruffian Filippo Argenti, who seems to have been in Florentine society the most notable example of a class now happily

extinct in civilised countries, at all events among adults; a kind of bully, or "Mohock," fond of rough practical jokes, prompted, not by a misguided sense of humour, but by an irritable man's delight in venting his spite. One can sympathise, even after six hundred years, in Dante's pious satisfaction when he saw the man, of whom he may himself have once gone in bodily fear, become in his turn the object of persecution. It is, however, after Malebolge is reached, and Dante is among the sinners who have by dishonest practices weakened the bond of confidence which should bind human society together, that he lets his wrath and scorn have full play. His imagery even takes on a grotesque, at times even a foul aspect. He was not one to mince his words, and if he means to sicken his readers, he goes straight to his aim.

It is to be noted, too, that the language and demeanour of the sinners themselves have in many cases changed. Above Malebolge, at all events till the usurers are reached, a certain dignity of speech and action is the rule. Now we find flippant expressions and vulgar gestures. Nothing is omitted which can give a notion, not merely of the sinfulness, but of the sordidness of dishonesty. Curiously enough, the one denizen of this region who is thoroughly dignified and even pathetic, is the pagan Ulysses; and to him Dante does not himself speak, leaving the pagan Virgil to hold all communication with him. Besides Ulysses, Guy of Montfeltro and Ugolino are presented in such a way as to enlist, in some degree, the sympathy of the reader; and it may further be noted that in each case a representative of the family in the next generation is placed in Purgatory; as though Dante, while bound to condemn the elder men, had held the houses in such esteem that he wished to balance the condemnation by assigning a better fate to their successors.

The opening of Canto xxxiii. brings us to the famous episode of Count Ugolino, which shares with the earlier one of Francesca da Rimini the widest renown of any passage in the whole poem. It is curious, by the way, that the structure of the two shows many marked parallelisms; only the tender pity which characterises Dante's treatment of the former is wholly lacking in the latter. There is no need to dwell on so well-known a story; but it may be noted that Ugolino, though a Guelf leader, and condemned here no doubt for his intrigues with the Ghibeline Archbishop Roger, came of a Ghibeline family, and thus forms only a partial exception to the rule stated above. The only genuine Guelf who is named in this division is Tesauro de' Beccheria, the Abbot of Vallombrosa.

This will perhaps be the best point at which to say a few words on a subject about which much misconception has prevailed. It has often been supposed that Dante was just a Ghibeline partisan, and distributed his characters in the next

world according to political sympathies. The truth is, that under no circumstances, so far as we can see, does he assign to any one his place on political grounds — that is, merely for having belonged to one or other of the great parties which then divided Italy. He himself, as we know, belonged to neither. His political ideal was a united world submitting to the general direction of the Emperor in temporal matters, of the Pope in spiritual. On the other hand, he would have had national forms of government retained. Brought up as he had been, the citizen and afterwards the official of a Guelf republic, there is no reason to suppose that a republican form of government was in any way distasteful to him, provided that it was honestly administered. It was not until the more powerful faction in the Guelf party called in the aid of an external power, unconnected with Italy, and hostile, or, as he would doubtless hold, rebellious, to the Empire, that he, along with the more "constitutional" branch of the Guelfs, threw in his lot with the long-banished Ghibelines. But neither then nor at any time did he belong to the Ghibeline party. So far from it, that he takes that party (in *Par.*, vi. 105) as the example of those who follow the imperial standard in the wrong way, and make it a symbol of iniquity. The greatest and most heroic figure in the whole history of the Ghibelines, the man whose love for the rebellious city was as great as Dante's own, who when he had by his prowess in arms recovered it for the Empire, stood resolutely between it and the destruction which in the opinion of his comrades it had merited, is condemned to share with a Pope and an Emperor the penalty of speculative heterodoxy. On the other hand, we find Charles of Anjou, the foreign intruder, the bitter foe of the Empire and pitiless exterminator of the imperial race, a man in whom later historians, free from personal or patriotic bias, have seen hardly any virtue to redeem the sombre cruelty of his career, placed, not indeed in Paradise, but in Purgatory, and waiting in sure and certain hope of ultimate salvation, as one who in spite of many faults had led a pure and ascetic life in a profligate and self-indulgent age. It would be interesting to know, if Dante had met Charles somewhat later, in which of the Purgatorial circles he would have placed him. He seems to evade the difficulty of classifying him by finding him where he does.

It is necessary to insist rather strongly on this point, since even so accomplished a scholar as the late Professor Bartoli, when dealing with Dante's reference to the Emperor Henry VII. (in *Par.*, xxx. 133, sqq.), forgets that all the saints in Paradise have their allotted seat in the Rose of the highest heaven, and speaks as though Dante had honoured Henry above all but the greatest saints and foretold his "direct flight from the earth to the Empyrean." Of course there is not a word of this. All that we are entitled to say is that Dante held Henry to be an Emperor who was doing his duty, and would earn his reward like any other

Christian and before Dante himself. It will be observed that he sees no other Emperor in Paradise, save Charlemagne; one, Rudolf of Hapsburg, is in, or rather just outside of, Purgatory; one, the great Frederick II., in Hell. Of the Popes one only, and he a Pope who in his life lay under grievous suspicion of heterodoxy, and moreover only occupied the Papal See for a few months, is placed in Heaven. This is "Peter of Spain," Pope John XXI. Two are in Purgatory; one of them, Martin IV., being a man who, as a Frenchman by birth, and a strong partisan of Charles of Anjou, might be supposed to have been specially obnoxious to Dante. No doubt Popes appear in what may seem an unfair proportion among the guilty souls below; but even for this distribution Dante could probably have pleaded orthodox authority and certainly scriptural support. "To whom much is given, of the same shall much be required." It is true, as Professor Bartoli points out, that Dante's "reverence for the supreme keys" was compatible with a very low estimate of their holders; but is not this exactly what we should expect from a man of high ideals and intolerant of failure in proportion to the dignity of the aim? His treatment of Pope Celestine, the one Pope of his time from whom, *prima facie*, something other than political partisanship might have been hoped, and who having put his hand to the plough had looked back, is sufficient to indicate his attitude in this matter.

Once realise that Dante was, like our own Milton, a man with a keen sense of what ought to be, and an equally keen appreciation of the fact that things in his time were by no means as they ought to be, that he was fallen on evil days and evil tongues — an appreciation which doubtless most great souls, short of the few greatest, have had at most periods of the world's history — and you have the key to much that no ordinary theory of party-spirit will explain. Men of this temper care little for the party cries of everyday politics; and yet they cannot quite sit outside the world of affairs and watch the players, as we may imagine Shakespeare to have done, in calm consciousness that the shaping of our rough-hewn ends was in other hands than ours. No great historian of Shakespeare's time devoted a whole chapter to his memory, as did Villani to that of Dante; yet we can hardly doubt that in the education of the world Shakespeare has borne the more important share, and Dante, with his deep conviction of the higher dignity of the "contemplative life," would be the first to own it.

The third subdivision, known as Tolommea, has, as one of its inmates says, the "privilege" of receiving the souls of sinners while their bodies are yet alive on earth, animated by demons. With this horrible conception we seem to have reached the highest mark of Dante's inventive power. Only two names are mentioned, but one feels that if the owners of them ever came across the poem in which they had earned so sinister a commemoration, their sentiment towards the

poet would hardly be one of gratitude. These are the last of his contemporaries whom Dante brands, the last, indeed, whom he recognises. In Giudecca (Canto xxxiv.) the sinners are wholly sunk below the ice, and only show through like straws or other small impurities in glass. An exception is made in the case of the three persons whom Dante regards as having carried the sin of ingratitude to its highest point. Lucifer, who, as has been said, is fixed at the lowest point, has three faces. In the mouth of the central one he for ever gnaws Judas Iscariot, while in the others are Brutus and Cassius.

The journey to the upper world is begun by a climb down the shaggy sides of the Archfiend himself. On reaching his middle, which is also the centre of the earth, the position is reversed, and the ascent begins. For a short distance they climb up by Lucifer's legs, then through a chimney in the rock; lastly, it would appear, following the course of a stream which winds spirally down through the earth, they reach the surface, and again come in sight of the stars.

§ 2. Purgatory.

After the invocation to the Muses, a curious survival of classical imagery with which in one form or another each division of the poem begins, Dante relates how, on emerging from the lower world, as Easter Day was dawning the poets found themselves on an island with the first gleam of day just visible on the distant sea. Venus is shining in the eastern heaven; and four stars, "never seen save by the earliest of mankind," are visible to the south. No doubt some tradition or report of the Southern Cross had reached men's ears in Europe; but the symbolical meaning is more important, and there can be no doubt that the stars denote the four "cardinal" or natural or active virtues of fortitude, temperance, justice, and prudence. In the evening, as we shall see later on, their place is taken by three other stars, which symbolise the theological or Christian or contemplative virtues — faith, hope, charity.

On turning again Dante sees close at hand an old man of venerable countenance, who questions them by what right they had come. Virgil recognises him for Cato of Utica, the Roman Republican patriot. His position here, as warder of the mount of purification, is very curious, and has never been thoroughly explained. Among other things it is probable that Dante was influenced by the Virgilian line in which Cato is introduced as the lawgiver of good men in the after-world. Being satisfied with the explanation given, Cato directs them to the shore, where Virgil is to wash the grime of Hell from Dante's face, and gird him with a rush, as an emblem of humility. When this has been done and as the sun is rising (Canto ii.) a light is seen approaching over the

water. As it draws near, it is seen to be an angel. His wings form the sails to a boat which comes to the shore, freighted with more than a hundred souls on their way to Purgatory. They are chanting the Easter Psalm *In exitu Israel*; at the sign of the cross made by the angel they come ashore, and begin by inquiring the way of Virgil. While he is explaining that he is no less strange to the country than they are, some of them perceive that Dante is a living man, and all crowd around him. Among them he recognises a friend, the musician Casella, who, after some affectionate words have passed between them, begins at Dante's request to sing one of the poet's own odes; and the crowd listen intently. But Cato comes up, and bidding them delay no longer, drives them like a flock of frightened pigeons towards the mountain.

Even Virgil is somewhat abashed on account of his participation in the delay (Canto iii.); but soon recovers his equanimity, and resumes his usual dignified pace. Dante for the first time observes that his companion casts no shadow on the ground, and Virgil explaining that the spiritual form, while capable of feeling pain, has not the property of intercepting light, takes occasion to point out that there are mysteries for which the human reason is unable to account, and that this very inability forms the chief unhappiness of the great thinkers whom they saw among the virtuous heathen on the border of Hell. With this they reach the foot of the mountain of Purgatory. As is explained elsewhere, this occupies a position exactly opposite to the conical pit of Hell; being indeed formed of that portion of the earth which fled at the approach of Satan when he fell from Heaven. Some of its features are no doubt borrowed from the legendary accounts which Pliny and others have preserved of a great mountain seen by navigators to the west of the Straits of Gibraltar; these accounts being probably based on imperfect descriptions of Atlas or Teneriffe, or both confused together. Its summit is exactly at the Antipodes of Jerusalem, a point which must be carefully borne in mind if the various astronomical indications of time given in the course of the journey are to be rightly understood.

The mountain-side, which Dante compares to the steepest and most rugged parts of the Genoese Riviera, appears at first, quite inaccessible; but before long they meet a company of spirits, who, after recovering from their first astonishment at seeing from Dante's shadow that he is not one of themselves, indicate to them the point at which the cliff may be attacked. Before they proceed further, one of the shades addressing Dante makes himself known as Manfred, son to the Emperor Frederick II., and gives an account of his end, explaining that excommunication — for he had died under the ban of the Church — is powerless to do more than protract the interval between the soul's admission to Purgatory. After this (Canto iv.) they enter a steep and narrow cleft

in the rock, from which they emerge upon a ledge on the mountain face, and a further climb up this lands them about noon on a broader terrace. Hitherto they have been mounting from the eastward, and on looking back in that direction, Dante is surprised to find the sun on his left hand. Virgil explains the topography; and is saying, in order to encourage Dante, that the labour of climbing will diminish as they get higher, when a bantering voice interrupts with the assurance that he will need plenty of sitting yet. The poet recognises in the speaker a Florentine friend. Another playful sarcasm on his thirst for information makes Dante address the shade and inquire as to his state. He, like Manfred, is debarred from entering Purgatory, but on the ground that he had led an easy life, and taken no thought of serious matters till his end drew near. In the following cantos (v. and vi.) we meet with many spirits who are from various causes in a similar position. First come those who have been cut off in the midst of their sins, but have sought for mercy at the last. The most noteworthy of these is Buonconte of Montefeltro, son of that Count Guy whom we met in the eighth pit of Malebolge. He was slain fighting against the Florentines at the battle of Campaldino (1289), in which Dante himself may possibly have borne arms. Four lines at the end of this canto are among the most famous in the poem. In a few words they commemorate one of the domestic tragedies which were only too familiar in mediæval Italy. Passing through the crowd, they fall in, as evening is drawing on, with a solitary shade, who replies to Virgil's inquiry for the best road by asking whence they come. At the answer, "Mantua," the shade springs up, and reveals himself as the famous warrior-poet of that city, Sordello. The affectionate greeting which follows between the fellow-citizens moves Dante to a splendid denunciation of the internecine quarrels then raging throughout Italy, and of the neglect on the part of the divinely ordained monarch, the Roman Emperor, which has allowed matters to come to such a pass. Lastly he directs his invective especially against his own city, Florence, and in words of bitter sarcasm upbraids her with the perpetual revolutions which hinder all good government.

Sordello is an example of those whom constant occupation in affairs of state had caused to defer any thought for spiritual things, and who are expiating the delay in the region outside the proper entrance to Purgatory. In Canto vii., after explaining that they will not be able to stir a step after sunset ("the night cometh when no man can work"), he leads the poets to a spot where they may pass the night. This is a flowery dell on the hillside, occupied by the spirits of those who in life had been sovereign princes and rulers. There they see the Emperor Rudolf and his adversary, Ottocar of Bohemia; Charles of Anjou, King of Naples and Sicily, Philip III. of France, Peter III. of Aragon, Henry III. of England, and

many other famous men of the last generation. Sordello, in pointing them out, takes occasion to enlarge on the degeneracy of their sons, making a special exception in favour of Edward, son of Henry.

The sun sets (Canto viii.) and the shades join in the Compline hymn. At its conclusion, two angels clad in green robes descend, and take up their position on either side of the little valley. Dante, with his companions, goes down to join the "mighty shades," and is met by one whom he at once recognises as an old friend, the Pisan noble Giovanni, or Nino de' Visconti, "judge" or governor of the Sardinian province called Gallura, nephew of Count Ugolino. After some talk Dante notices the three stars spoken of above, and at the same moment Sordello draws Virgil's attention to an "adversary." They see a serpent making its way through the grass; and immediately the angels start in pursuit, putting it to flight. After this episode another shade announces himself as Conrad Malaspina, of the house with whom Dante was to find shelter during a part of his exile.

The night wears on, and Dante falls asleep (Canto ix.). He dreams that he is being carried by an eagle up to the empyrean heaven. On awaking he finds that the sun has risen some time, and learns from Virgil that at daybreak St. Lucy (who has already come under notice as taking an interest in his welfare) had appeared and borne him to the place where they now are, in front of the gate of Purgatory. This is approached by three steps of variously-coloured stone. The first is white marble, the second a dark and rough rock, the third blood-red porphyry, indicating probably the three stages of the soul's progress to freedom through confession, contrition, and penance. On the topmost step sits an angel, who having marked seven P's (*peccata* sins) on Dante's forehead, admits them within the gate.

Thus far, except in the passage, Canto viii. 19 sqq., to which Dante himself draws the reader's attention, the allegorical interpretation has not afforded any very great difficulty. With this particular passage readers will do well to compare *Inf.*, ix. 37 sqq., where a very similar indication is given of an underlying allegory, and draw their own conclusions. But on the whole, the main interest of the first nine cantos of the *Purgatory* is more of a personal nature. Sordello alone may give an excuse for a good deal of historical research. For example, no one has yet explained Dante's reasons for so distinguishing a person who, from all the records that we have, does not seem to have made any great figure in the eyes of his contemporaries.

It will hardly be necessary to follow Dante step by step through the stages of the mountain of purification. We shall probably do best to consider the general plan on which Purgatory is arranged, the nature of the various penances, with their adaptation to the offences which they expiate, and the light thrown in this

division of the poem on Dante's opinions about the elements of political and moral science.

We find, then, seven cornices, or ledges, on the mountain, connected with each other by stairways cut in the rock. Each stairway is guarded by an angel, and each, as it would appear, is shorter and less steep than the previous one. Thus the passage from the first to the second circle takes a considerable time, enough at all events to allow of some conversation between Dante and Virgil between the moment of their passing the angel and that at which they reach the top of the stairway. On the other hand, when they come to the final ascent, from the seventh circle to the level of the Earthly Paradise which occupies the summit, a few steps are sufficient to bring them to their halting-place, which, as appears afterwards, is practically on the summit level. Each angel, as Dante passes, erases from his forehead one of the P's which the warder of the first gate had inscribed there, and utters one of the Scriptural Beatitudes appropriate to the circle which they are quitting. Thus, "Blessed are the peacemakers" accompanies their departure from the circle of the wrathful; "Blessed are they that hunger after righteousness" is heard as they leave that where gluttony is expiated.

The ritual, so to speak, is very precise throughout. Besides the Beatitudes, which are recited by the angel-guards, and in some cases it would seem repeated by a chorus of voices, we find in each circle commemoration variously contrived of notable instances, both of the sins punished and of their "contrary virtues." These are perhaps worth going through in detail. In the circle of Pride, where it is necessary to go in a stooping posture, the pavement is engraved with representations of humility. The first is the Annunciation, (and here it should be noted that in every group an event from the life of the Virgin holds the first place); next comes David dancing before the Ark; and lastly, Trajan yielding to the widow's prayer that he would perform an act of justice before setting out with the pomp of a military expedition. Further on in the same circle are found examples of the punishment of pride, taken alternately from Scripture and from classical mythology. The next circle is that of Envy. Here the penalty consists of the sewing up of the eyes, so that pictured representations would be of no use; and, accordingly, the task of calling the examples to mind is discharged by voices flying through the air. Yet another method is adopted in the third circle, where the Angry are punished by means of a dense smoke. Here the pictures are conveyed to Dante's mind by a kind of trance or vision, in which he sees the various scenes. We must suppose that the spirits pass through some similar experience. In the fourth circle, the examples of activity and warnings against Sloth are delivered by the souls themselves. As it is night while Dante is in this circle, he is himself unable to move; but the discipline being to run at speed, the

souls pass him in their course. The fifth circle, of the Avaricious and Prodigal, follows much the same rule as the fourth, except that here the instances of virtue are recited in the day, those of sin at night, so that Dante does not actually hear the latter. In this case the souls lie prostrate. The Gluttonous, in the sixth circle, are punished by having to pass under trees laden with fruit, which they cannot reach; and the examples and warnings are conveyed by voices among the branches of these trees. The seventh circle follows the fashion of the fourth, except that the souls (who are punished by fire for having in life failed to hold in due restraint the flames of passion) seem to address the warning reminiscences to each other as they meet in the circuit. An instance of the system on which the examples are introduced has been given from the first circle. Perhaps that for the sixth is even more typical. On first entering this they come to a tree, among the branches of which a voice is heard recording the conduct of the Virgin at the feast in Cana, when "she thought more of the success of the banquet than of her own mouth;" the custom of drinking only water prevalent among the Roman women, and the abstemiousness of Daniel and the Baptist. Then, after passing through a portion of the circle, and holding converse with its inmates, they reach another tree, from which a second voice comes to them bidding them remember the trouble that came from the drunkenness of the Centaur at the wedding of Pirithous, and the rejection by Gideon of the men who had drunk immoderately. This coupling of a classical and Scriptural instance is quite invariable.

To pass on to the subject of the light thrown upon Dante's speculative views in the *Purgatory*. It is not too much to say that from that point of view it is the most important division of the whole poem. This, perhaps, follows naturally from its subject. The Purgatorial existence bears more affinity to the life of this world than does that of those who have reached their eternal abode; and human affections and human interests still have much of their old power. This, then, would naturally be the division in which questions arising from the conditions of man's life with men would be likely to suggest themselves.

In the *Hell* we had indeed a statement of Dante's view of Ethics, so far as was necessary to explain his attitude towards breaches of the moral law and their punishment. In the *Purgatory* he goes more deeply into the question, and expounds in Cantos xvi., xvii., and xviii., a theory with regard to the origin of morals and knowledge. According to this the soul when created is a *tabula rasa*, but having certain capacities inherent in it in consequence of the nature of its Creator. The Creator being absolutely veracious, the information imparted by the senses is infallible. Further, the Creator being absolutely happy, the soul naturally seeks happiness, and is said to love that in which it expects to find

happiness. So far there is no room for error. Where it can come in is in the inferences which the mind draws from the information which the senses give, and in either its choice of an object to love, or the vigour with which it pursues that object. It must be further noted that the soul is endowed at the outset with a knowledge of good and evil, *i.e.* conscience, and with free-will; though this latter has to struggle with the conditions which the influence of the heavenly bodies imposes on the individual. With due culture, however, it can ultimately prevail over these; but it must also be aided in its struggle by the check of law and the guidance which should be afforded by spiritual pastors. In order that these may have their full effect, it is desirable that the secular and spiritual authorities should be in different hands: and thus we are brought to the same conclusions as in the treatise *De Monarchia*.

To return, however, to the moral question. All action, as has been said, is directed to an end, and (in the words of Aquinas, following Aristotle) the end for each individual is that which he desires and loves. If the end is rightly selected, and the love duly proportioned, the action does not incur blame. But it may happen that the end may be evil; in which case evil becomes the object of the love, or the love is turned to hatred. Now, no created being can hate its Creator, nor can any man hate himself; therefore the sins arising from this cause must be sins against fellow-men. These, so far as Purgatory is concerned, are pride, envy, anger, which, when carried into action, become the sins that are punished within the City of Dis, though in Purgatory they would appear on the whole to be regarded as the less grave offences.

When the object is good, but the love is lacking in due vigour, we have the sin of sloth, or, as our forefathers called it, “accidie.” This occupies a somewhat anomalous position. Those who have allowed it to grow to moodiness and given way to it past hope of repentance, lie in Hell at the bottom of the Stygian marsh, and nothing is seen of them but the bubbles which are formed by their sighs; while the wrathful or ill-tempered lie in the same marsh, but appear above the water. Both sins alike render the man full of hatred for his fellows, and make him insensible to the joy of life. In Purgatory, on the other hand, the anger which is punished seems rather to be the fault of hasty temper; while in the case of sloth, the souls who expiate it are represented as running at great speed, and proclaiming instances of conspicuous alertness. For our present purpose, then, it must be regarded as merely slothfulness or indolence.

Finally, we have the cases in which the object is natural, or even laudable. A fair share of this world’s goods, our daily food, the love between man and woman, all these are objects to which the desires may lawfully be directed, so long as they are duly restrained. When, however, they become the main aim,

they are sinful, and lead to the sins for which the discipline of the three upper cornices is required; the most severe of all that is undergone in Purgatory. Yet these are the sins which in Hell “incur less blame,” as being sins involving rather the animal than the spiritual part of man. But there is not space here to discuss this aspect of the subject. Readers will find much interest in working it out for themselves.

The physiological sketch given by Statius in the twenty-fifth canto, introduced to account for the spiritual body, is in logical order an introduction to Dante’s ethics and psychology; and is remarkable both in its agreement with Aristotle and its divergence from him. The occasion for it is found in a question raised by Dante, and suggested to him by the appearance of the shades in the circle which they have just left: namely, how beings who have no need to go through the ordinary process of nutrition, can feel the desire for food (as Forese has explained that they do) and grow lean through the deprivation of it. In order to solve this difficulty, Statius sketches briefly the stages of the development of the human being, from his first conception until he has an independent existence, showing how the embryo progresses first to vegetative then to animal life, and how finally, when the brain is complete (this being the last stage in the organisation), the “First Mover” breathes the human soul into the frame. The soul, having thus an independent existence, when the frame decays sets itself loose therefrom, taking with it the senses and passions, as well as the mental faculties of memory, understanding, and will. The latter are still in full activity, but the former have only a potential existence until such time as the soul has found its place in the other world. Then it takes to itself a bodily shape, formed out of the surrounding air (as a flame is formed by the fire), and equips it with organs of sense; and thenceforward this shape is adapted to express all the natural emotions and desires, including of course those of hunger and thirst. This remarkable exposition is based on Aristotle’s theory of the generation of the body, and the introduction into it of the soul; but there is an important difference. The Greek philosopher, though his language is not very explicit, has apparently no idea of any survival of the personal identity after death. At all events, so he was interpreted by Averroes and later by Aquinas. With him the source of all movement is the father, from whom only (though here again Aristotle is not quite clear) comes the gift of a soul. Dante, on the contrary, refers these back to the Prime Mover, namely God, and conceives a special creative act as performed on behalf of every human being that is brought into the world. As will be easily seen, this conception is the necessary complement to Dante’s system of ethics, based on individual free-will, and postulating a newly-created soul, fresh from

the Maker's hand; a *tabula rasa*, with no attributes save the natural propension towards that which gives it pleasure.

We may now pass to the six cantos which conclude this division of the poem, and form a most important stage in the development of the whole plan. Dante has now proceeded as far as human reason, typified by Virgil, is able to guide him. He is on the threshold of Heaven; but before he can be admitted among the blessed, another conductor must be provided, to whom the way to the Divine Presence shall be freely open. This, of course, can only be knowledge informed by faith, or, as we may say for shortness, theology, not in the sense of a formal science, but in one approaching more nearly to what Aristotle calls *Theoria*, or contemplation. From certain expressions in the earliest cantos of the poem, it is clear that Dante looked upon the woman whom in his youth he had loved, and who had, at the supposed date of these events, been ten years dead, as symbolising this *Theoria*, and as being in some special way entrusted with the task of saving him from spiritual ruin. She accordingly appears, and takes up the duties which Virgil is surrendering. The manner of her appearance must be noticed — showing as it does the almost inextricable web in which Dante combines fact and allegory. That the "Beatrice" who is introduced is primarily none other than an actual woman of flesh and blood, whom hundreds of then living people had known, who had gone about Florence for twenty-four years and married a prominent citizen, and whom Dante had loved with the romantic passion of the Middle Ages, only the misplaced ingenuity of paradoxical critics can doubt. Yet at her entry she is escorted by a procession, the members of which represent the books of the Bible, the seven virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; while the car on which she is borne (which itself denotes the Church) is drawn by a mystical figure, in which we cannot fail to see a symbol of the second Person of the Trinity. If it be objected that the salvation of Dante is a small matter about which to set in motion so stupendous a machinery, we may answer that, in the first place, his own salvation does not seem unimportant to the man himself; and further, which is of more weight, that Dante himself is here no less symbolical than Beatrice, or Virgil, or the mystic Gryphon. He is the typical human soul; his experiences, his struggles, his efforts to shake himself free of the trammels of the world and the flesh, are familiar features in the spiritual history of the great majority of Christians. Thus the wonderful pageant described in this canto must be regarded as being displayed, not to him only, but to all Christendom in his person.

A few words with regard to this pageant may afford a little help to its comprehension. After the arrival of Beatrice, a scene follows in which she upbraids Dante for his forgetfulness of her, and receives an avowal of his fault.

He is then bathed in the stream of Lethe — another curious employment of pagan mythology — and brought back to the presence of Beatrice. Hitherto she has been veiled; but now, at the special entreaty of her attendant nymphs (those nymphs who are also the four stars in heaven, and denote the cardinal virtues), she withdraws the veil, and discloses again the smile for which her "faithful one" had yearned during ten years.

Soon, however, his attention is called away to new and strange sights. The procession, of which Dante and his remaining companion Statius now form part, moves forward through the wood of the Earthly Paradise; the car is attached to a tree, identified with the "tree of knowledge," which since Adam's disobedience has been leafless and fruitless. After this Dante falls into a short sleep, and on waking finds that Beatrice with her attendants is alone left, as a guardian to the car. Then follow a series of strange transformations, the general plan of which is clearly suggested by the Apocalypse; but their interpretation is to be sought in the relations of the Church to the Empire, down to the time of the "Babylonish captivity," or transference of the Papal See to Avignon. This is symbolised by the departure of the car, drawn this time by a giant (Philip the Fair of France), and occupied no longer by Beatrice, but by a harlot, to denote (again with allusion to the Apocalypse) the corrupt rule under which the Church had fallen.

In the final scene of all, Beatrice, in phrases hardly less obscure than the vision itself, indicates to Dante the lesson which he is to learn from it, and repeats in another form Virgil's prediction of a champion who is to come and set the world to rights. Much has been written about the first of these, the *Veltro*; hardly less about the "five hundred, ten, and five," or DXV. The usual interpretation takes these letters as intended merely to suggest *Dux*, a leader; but this seems a little weak. Elsewhere I have given reasons for thinking that Dante had a special motive for wrapping up his meaning in this numerical form.

Lastly, in a passage which, though ostensibly only one of Dante's usual time-indications, seems intended to suggest repose after the labours through which he has brought his readers, and the agitation of the last canto, he tells us that at noon they reached the edge of the forest. Here he is made to drink of another stream, Eunoe, or "right mind," after which he is ready for the upward journey.

It is too much to expect readers to work through the voluminous interpretations which have been offered of the very difficult and perplexing mysticism of these cantos. Some points are perhaps plainer to the student who considers them with a fair knowledge of the Bible and history, than to the commentator who wishes to establish a new and original theory. But they are so important (particularly Cantos xxx. and xxxi.) to any one who wishes to understand Dante's whole position as man, poet, scholar, and politician, that

they should not be passed over as mere futile mediæval fancies. It should be said, too, that they contain some passages which will never be out of date until the poetic taste of mankind has altogether changed.

§ 3. Paradise.

The first point which will strike the reader on entering upon the third division of the poem is the sudden change in the conditions under which the action is carried on. Hitherto Dante has been moving on solid earth, subject to the usual limitations which are enforced by physical laws upon all human action. Henceforth, as he tells us (*Par.*, xxx. 123), God operates directly, and physical laws have no longer any place. “It is Beatrice,” he elsewhere says, “who leads on so swiftly from one stage of blessedness to a higher;” and we shall notice that the transference from sphere to sphere is effected by Dante’s fixing his eyes on hers, while she gazes upwards.

A word as to the various spheres may not be out of place here. According to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, as adapted to the requirements of mediæval belief, the earth was at the centre, and concentric with it were ten hollow spheres. In the first eight of these were placed consecutively the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the fixed stars. In order to explain the irregular movements of the planets, “epicycles” or smaller spheres borne by the principal spheres, and bearing the planets, were devised, but these need not be considered here. Outside of the fixed stars came the *primum mobile*, which gave the diurnal revolution of the heavens, and beyond this the Empyrean, or fixed heaven, in which was the special abode of God, and in which all the blessed had their places. Between the earth and the innermost sphere, that of the Moon, lie the regions of water, air, and fire. The Mountain of Purgatory, on the summit of which Dante at the conclusion of the second *Cantica* was standing, lifts its head as far as the third of these. Through this accordingly, Beatrice and Dante have to rise in order to reach the first step in the celestial ascent. It must be noted that there is no reason to suppose that in every case the actual planet is visited. The “heaven” of the planet embraces the whole “sphere” in which it is set, and its characteristics may be conceived as extending to the whole of that sphere.

The fact of rising without apparent motive force through a medium lighter than his own body, at once forms a subject for enquiry on Dante’s part; and Beatrice, as she has frequently to do in the course of their journey, resolves his doubt. Those who are reading the poem for the first time will probably pass lightly over these difficult metaphysical passages. They must be read sooner or later by any one who wishes thoroughly to understand Dante’s place in the

history of speculative thought; but in the first instance it will probably be better to "take them as read" and endeavour to get a clear notion of the general arrangement. There are obvious reasons why this portion of the poem should consist as largely as it does of these subtle disquisitions. There is far less room, in the first place, for variety of description. In a region where there are no shadows, it is impossible to give a detailed picture; and terms indicative of simple brightness are limited. Nor, again, is it easy where all are perfect to depict individual character. Consequently two great elements of interest in the first two parts of the poem are far less available here; and their place must be filled by other matter. What this matter should be is suggested by the natural division of speculative science into Ethics, or the study of man's conduct as a moral being; Politics, or the science relating to his behaviour in regard to the social order; and Metaphysics, which for Dante is synonymous with theology, the investigation of all that concerns his spiritual part, as well as the Divine order generally. With the first two we have dealt in the *Hell* and the *Purgatory* respectively; the third is reserved for the *Paradise*. Once or twice indeed Dante touches on matters that would seem more fitly to belong to the others; as, for instance, the magnificent passage in Canto vi., where Justinian, after sketching the triumphant course of the Roman Eagle, inveighs against the party feuds of the time; or Carlo Martello's reference to the Sicilian Vespers, and the misdeeds of his brother Robert. But of these the first leads up to an elaborate exposition of the scheme of Redemption, the second seems intended directly to introduce a dissertation on matters lying at the very root of human nature.

To the same difficulty in varying the methods (to use a phrase of Ginguéné's) must be attributed the occurrence of a good many conceptions which to our taste appear somewhat grotesque. Yet the better we know the poem the more we shall feel that in this third part the author's genius rises to its sublimest efforts, and agree with the late Dean of St. Paul's, that it is the true *pierre de touche* of the student of Dante.

To go briefly through the various stages. The heaven of the Moon is that in which appear the spirits of those who having taken vows have under compulsion or persuasion abandoned them; Mercury contains statesmen and men of affairs; Venus those who have been over-much swayed by indulgence in earthly love. It must be observed that, according to the astronomy of the time, the shadow of the Earth, cast into space by the Sun, extended as far as the orbit of Venus. The spirits in these three spheres therefore form a group by themselves: being distinguished by the fact that they had allowed earthly cares and pleasures to obtain too strong hold of them, to the injury of their spiritual development. In these three spheres respectively the representative speakers are Piccarda Donati,

sister of Dante's friend Forese, and of Corso, the leader of the "Black Guelfs;" the Emperor Justinian; and Carlo Martello, the titular king of Hungary, son of Charles II., king of Naples, who is followed by Cunizza, sister of the Ghibeline chief, Ezzelino da Romano, and Folco of Marseilles, who began as a troubadour and became bishop of his native city.

Although in one sense the inhabitants of the three lower spheres may be said to have attained a less perfect blessedness than those to whom the rest of heaven is assigned, it must not be supposed that they are conscious of any lack. All have their places in the highest or Empyrean heaven, and all sense of sorrow for past imperfections is at an end. We must indeed suppose that, as with Dante himself, the imperfections have been effaced by the discipline of Purgatory, and their remembrance washed away by the water of Lethe.

With the sphere of the Sun, however, we arrive for the first time in the presence of those who have lived so as to earn the full honour of sanctity, and find ourselves amongst canonised saints. Even here Dante has shown himself, as usual, independent of conventional or official restrictions. In his introduction of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventura he merely anticipates the formal decision of the Church; but in "Peter of Spain," that is Pope John XXI. (the only historical Pope whom he places in Paradise), he selects for special honour a man who was by no means free from grave suspicion of heresy, and who has never been canonised. As Dante never did anything without a reason we must suppose that some now forgotten merit earned for the Spanish logician a place beside Nathan, Chrysostom, and Anselm. It is by these and such men as these, great teachers and thinkers, that the heaven of the Sun is occupied; the reason no doubt being that as the Sun is the source of light and the promoter of growth in the physical world, so are these in the spiritual.

The tenth canto is specially notable as bringing Dante into the presence of the greatest exponent of the Scholastic philosophy, and the master whom he followed more closely than any other, St. Thomas Aquinas. In the eleventh, the illustrious Dominican recounts the life of St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the rival order. This is one of the most notable passages in the whole poem, rising as it does to a sustained magnificence of diction which especially characterises those portions of the *Paradise* where the poet allows full play to his genius. Justinian's roll-call of the Roman achievements in Canto vi. is another. Nothing at all like them is found in the two former divisions of the poem; and it is to them that students who wish to feel the attraction which the *Paradise* undoubtedly exercises over those who know it well, should first turn.

The sphere of the Sun, in which we now are, is, it should be noted, one of the two regions of Heaven in which Dante makes the longest stay, the other being

that of the Fixed Stars. The passage to it marks a distinct stage in his progress. Looking back to the end of Canto ix. we see that it forms a kind of peroration; while the first twenty-seven lines of Canto x. are, as it were, the introduction to a fresh division of the poem, and recall certain phrases which occurred in the opening canto. It is difficult to say why these two spheres should be made of so much more importance than the rest. Mars is the only one which approaches them; but this is selected by Dante as the scene of his interview with his ancestor Cacciaguida, which gives the occasion for the magnificent contrast between the old days of Florence and its present state, and the prophecy of his own exile; subjects which might well occupy a considerable space. On the other hand, the eulogy of St. Francis, already referred to, which St. Thomas Aquinas delivers, and that of St. Dominic, with which St. Bonaventura, "vying with the courtesy of so mighty a paladin," responds to it, fine as they are, do not appear indispensable in the scheme of the poem. But the whole plan of the *Paradise* is, so far as can be seen, arranged with much less of obvious symmetry than is to be found in the two former *Cantiche*. No doubt the plan is there; but just as "time-indications" for the most part fail us, or can be extracted only by elaborate and somewhat uncertain calculations, so it would seem as if the poet, no longer hampered by the necessities of time and space, had wished to show how he could work with no self-made restrictions.

After his discourse in praise of the founder of the rival order, immediately followed by its counterpart — an eloquent summary of the career of St. Dominic, put into the mouth of the Franciscan Bonaventura — St. Thomas speaks again (Canto xiii.), in order to explain an apparent over-estimate of Solomon's greatness among mankind which an expression used by him in naming the spirits present with him might have seemed to imply. As happens more than once in this division of the poem, a piece of what at first sight looks rather like logical quibbling is made the introduction to some profound teaching in reference to the workings of the human mind — teaching which is at least as needful in the present day as it ever was in Dante's own time. Solomon himself then speaks, answering a question put by Beatrice on Dante's behalf as to the nature of the glorified body; and then Dante, having looked upon the countenance of Beatrice, and being by this means (as in every other case) raised "to a higher salvation," finds by the ruddy light which surrounds him that he has entered the sphere of Mars.

A new feature appears here. In each of the three planets exterior (according to the astronomy of that age) to the Sun, we find some special image displayed. In the case of Mars, it is a vast crucifix, composed of spirits, who are darting in all directions within the figure, like motes in a sunbeam. One of them glides from

the arm to the foot of the cross, and makes himself known to Dante as his great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, probably (though this is not certain) of the family of the Elisei. He had been, like all the other spirits, as it would seem, of this sphere, a soldier, and had died in battle as a Crusader. The latter half of this, the fifteenth canto, together with the two following, form what is probably the best-known and most frequently quoted portion of the *Paradise*. First we have a beautiful picture of the simple and kindly life of old Florence, before party-spirit and luxury had entered and corrupted its citizens. The picture is, of course, one of those which people in every age have drawn of earlier times, supposed to have been free from the corruptions which each man's experience teaches him are rife in his own day; but none the less it is of value as showing Dante's ideal of social life.

The next canto continues to deal with the same topic; but enters more into detail with regard to the various families, and the vicissitudes in their fortunes. This leads up to the existing strife of parties, and this again naturally to Dante's own share in it, and his exile. It must be remembered that this did not actually come about till two years after the date at which the action of the *Commedia* is supposed to take place; so that the whole is cast into a prophetic form. The language used, however, must be taken as expressing the feeling with which Dante looked back after an interval of nearly twenty years — for the *Paradise* was probably completed very shortly before the poet's death — upon the events in which he had borne a somewhat prominent part. Whether he was ever a personage of the first importance in Florence we may be allowed to doubt. No doubt he was a man of some consideration; but still the office of Prior was one which nearly every eligible citizen must have held; and Villani, who devotes a chapter to his memory, does not mention his name among the political leaders of an earlier period. Probably he occupied among the exiles of 1302 a far less important place in their own eyes and those of contemporaries than he does in ours; but if not a leader, he was in the front rank, and must have been aware of all that went on. The passages relating to his exile, to the worthlessness of his companions, to his gratitude towards those who helped him, gain immensely in force and pathos if we regard them as an aging man's reminiscences of a long by-gone time.

With the passage to the sphere of Jupiter (Canto xviii.) the imagery becomes yet more daring. This is the region specially devoted to the spirits of the righteous; and these as they fly are forming letters, which ultimately spell out the opening words of the Book of Wisdom: "Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram." When the final M is reached a further transformation takes place; the letter is gradually modified into the shape of the imperial eagle. Righteousness, or

justice, is, it should be remembered, in Dante's view (as indeed in that of most moralists) the source and foundation of all that goes to establish human society on a virtuous and duly ordered basis. Thus it is rightly illustrated by the symbol of the Empire. The Eagle behaves as one single individual, though composed of countless spirits; speaking with a single voice, and in the singular number. A discourse on justice leads up to a sharp rebuke of nearly every prince then ruling, on the score of misgovernment in one or another form.

After this the Eagle proceeds to indicate whose are the spirits which compose its eye. These with one exception are all great sovereigns of ancient and recent times. The exception is remarkable. In Hell we found several cases in which mythological or fictitious personages were treated on a footing of absolute equality with those who had a perfect historical claim to the distinction; but the appearance in the Christian Heaven of a man whose very name is preserved merely in a single line of the *Æneid* strikes us with astonishment. For being recorded by Virgil as the most righteous man among the Trojans, Rhipeus takes his place beside David, Hezekiah, Constantine, and the "good king" William II. of Sicily.

When the time comes for the ascent to be resumed, Dante notices that Beatrice smiles no longer. On the threshold, as she explains, of the seventh heaven, the lustre of her smile would be more than his eyes could endure. Here, in Saturn, a ladder is seen, reaching to the next sphere. We learn that this is identical with the ladder seen by Jacob in his vision; and down it are descending the spirits of such as in this world had lived the contemplative life in full perfection. The chanting which has been audible in the other spheres is here silent — no doubt in order to symbolise the insensibility to outward impressions of the soul rapt in contemplation. The speakers in this group are St. Peter Damian and St. Benedict; both of whom have severe words to say as to the corruption of the monastic orders.

The company of saints reascend (Canto xxii.): and Dante and Beatrice follow them, mounting by the ladder, but, as it would appear, with no perceptible lapse of time. The eighth heaven, that of the Fixed Stars, is reached in the sign of the Twins; under which Dante himself had been born. At this point Beatrice directs him, before entering on the final blessedness of heaven, and doubtless with the ulterior view of leading him to a just sense of the insignificance of earthly things, to look back over the course which he has traversed.

A very distinct stage of the journey is here reached, and, as has been already noticed, we are entering that one of the celestial spheres in which Dante makes the longest stay.

He and his guide have now reached the outermost of the heavenly spheres of whose existence our senses give any evidence — that of the Fixed Stars. A vision of Christ descending, accompanied by His Mother, and surrounded with saints, is granted to Dante; after which he is again able to endure the effulgence of Beatrice's smile. It is not, however, until Christ has reascended that he recovers his full power of sight. Then he perceives that the company of saints has remained; and presently, at the request of Beatrice, St. Peter comes forward, and proceeds to examine Dante on the subject of Faith, and the grounds for his belief in the Christian revelation. The ensuing colloquy is interesting, as being practically a versified form of the scholastic method of discussion, such as we find in Aquinas. St. Peter plays the part of the supposed opponent, and brings forward the standard objections to Dante's statements of dogma. For the ordinary reader, however, this and the next two cantos form, it must be admitted, one of the less attractive portions of the poem. Yet even here we now and then come upon a passage of pure poetry, such as the famous lines at the opening of Canto xxv., in which Dante utters what must have been almost his last aspiration after a return to "the fair fold in which as a lamb I slept."

Following St. Peter, St. James makes his appearance. To him is entrusted the task of testing Dante's soundness in the doctrine and definition of Hope. Lastly, comes St. John, who examines him touching the right object of Love. In each case, when he has answered to the satisfaction of his questioner, a chant goes up from the assembled spirits; the words on every occasion being taken, as it would appear, from the *Te Deum*. Afterwards the three Apostles are joined by Adam, who takes up the discourse, and answers two unexpressed questions of Dante's, as to the length of his stay in Paradise, and the nature of the primitive language of mankind.

Canto xxvii. opens with a tremendous invective, put into the mouth of St. Peter, against the corruption of the Papacy; a passage which incidentally contains an important piece of evidence with regard to the date at which the later cantos of the *Paradise* were written. A bitter allusion to "men of Cahors" can have been evoked only by the election of John XXII., who was from that city; and he became Pope in 1316. After this the whole multitude of Saints ascend to the highest heaven; but before Dante follows, Beatrice makes him look down once more, and he perceives that since his entry into this sphere he has moved with the diurnal rotation through an arc of forty-five degrees. Then they ascend into the sphere of the First Motion, where place and time no longer exist. From its movement time is measured; and its place is in the Divine intelligence only. Here the Empyrean, or highest Heaven, comes into view; at first as a point of intense brilliancy round which nine circles are revolving. These represent the

Angelic hierarchies, and their places with regard to the central point are in inverse order to that of the spheres which they move. Beatrice takes occasion from them to instruct Dante upon some points relating to the creation and functions of the angels, and incidentally, upon the creation of form and matter, and their combination in the visible universe. The passage (Canto xxix.) is difficult; but is so magnificent in its diction as to deserve careful study. Dante has nowhere else succeeded so completely in clothing with poetry the dry bones of scholastic theology. The discussion, by dealing with several disputed points, gives occasion for some stringent remarks on the preachers of the time.

They now rise to the highest heaven, outside of all the spheres, in which all the blessed have their true place. At first Dante is aware of light only, but gradually a fresh power of sight comes to him, and he sees a river, from and to which bright sparks are ever issuing and returning. The banks are brilliant with flowers. At the command of Beatrice he bows down and drinks, and at once sees the river as a lake of light, the flowers on the banks as concentric rows of saints seated on thrones, and the flitting sparks as angels. At this point Beatrice leaves Dante, after a few scathing words in reference to the “covetousness” of the Papacy, which has put the world out of joint — words which may be taken as summing up in brief all the passages throughout the poem in which political affairs are touched upon. With this, if we except one bitter jibe at Florence (xxxi. 39) all controversial matters are dismissed, and the last three cantos of the poem are devoted to a description, rising ever in sublimity, of the joys and mysteries of Heaven.

The “soldiery of heaven” appears in the form of a vast white rose, whose petals are the seats on which the saints sit. On one hand these are filled, being occupied by holy men and women belonging to the old dispensation: while on the other the number of the elect has still to be accomplished. Beatrice having gone back to her place among the blessed beside Rachel, the task of escorting Dante is entrusted to St. Bernard, who points out where some of the more eminent have their stations. As throughout the poem, all is arranged with order and symmetry. The junction between the Old and New Testaments is indicated by the position assigned to Our Lady on one side of the circle, and in the highest row, and St. John the Baptist, who is diametrically opposite to her. Below her sit in order a series of Christ’s ancestresses Eve, Rachel, Sarah, Rebekah, Ruth; Adam is on her left, St. Peter on her right, beyond them Moses and St. John the Evangelist. On either hand of the Baptist sit St. Anne and St. Lucy, and below him a line of founders of orders and other teachers; the lower circles are filled with the spirits of children.

At the close of his enumeration of these chief personages, St. Bernard observes that the time of Dante's slumber is nearly at an end, and that they must, "like a good tailor, cut the coat according to the cloth." In these three lines are two very noticeable points. First, the word "slumber," implying that the whole journey through the other world has been performed in a dream; and secondly, the bold use, at perhaps the most exalted moment of the whole poem, of a trivial, almost vulgar, figure of speech. We meet with other instances of this in the *Paradise,* and they are eminently characteristic of the mediæval mind. The subject is too wide to be discussed here; but readers may be reminded of the numerous examples which the architecture of the period shows, in which grotesque or even indecent figures are introduced among the ornamental work of sacred buildings.

At the beginning of the last canto, St. Bernard, in an address of exquisite beauty (of which Chaucer, in the Second Nun's Tale has given an almost equally exquisite rendering), appeals to the Virgin — who, it will be remembered, is throughout represented as taking a special interest in Dante — for her aid to him in his last and crowning experience. Thus succoured, he is able to gaze upon the Supreme Light; and in a flash there is revealed to him a full comprehension of all fundamental truths, first those of metaphysics, then those of faith. He understands for a moment the whole composition of the universe, and then the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity. The intuition is momentary, and leaves merely the memory of a memory. But the lasting effect is the entire union of his will with the Divine will, and herein, we must understand him to imply, is found the salvation the attainment of which has been the ultimate aim and object of his whole journey.

Many touches in this concluding passage bear a strong resemblance to what seems to have been the teaching of the contemporary German mystics. It would be interesting to inquire how far Dante can have been acquainted with any of the writings of that school. If any connection can be traced, it may throw light on several obscure points.

It remains to be added that the *Commedia* was first printed at Foligno in 1472. Editions followed in quick succession from Jesi, Mantua, and Naples. The first Venetian edition is that of Vindelin of Spires, in 1477; the first Florentine, that with Landino's commentary, in 1481. It was printed several times more before 1500, and constantly in the sixteenth century. We have several commentaries dating from a period only later by a few years than Dante's death.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MINOR WORKS

The *Commedia* is, for many readers perhaps, the only book distinctly identified with Dante's name. Yet it must be remembered that, as a matter of fact, it represents less than half of the total bulk of his writings; and, further, that the remainder comprises several works which, though not attaining to the pre-eminent position which all the world now recognises the great poem as occupying, are very remarkable monuments of mediæval literature.

Of the youthful work, the *Vita Nuova*, we have already spoken. It may be sufficient here to add that — though there is some controversy on the point — the name probably means only "Early" or "Fresh Life." The book was pretty certainly written not much after 1290, though the last chapter, in which the author's design to compose a greater work is alluded to, may have been added when the scheme of the *Commedia* was more developed. The *Vita Nuova* was not printed till 1578.

With regard to the date at which the most important of the prose works, known as the *Convito*, or "Banquet," was composed, considerable uncertainty exists. Villani says that the odes to which it is ostensibly a commentary were written in exile. Some critics hold that it belongs, at all events in great part, to the "pre-exilian" period of Dante's life; while others place it as late as 1310. The late Dr. Witte regarded it as the middle division of what he called "Dante's Trilogy" — the drama, that is, of the development of Dante's soul. In this view, the early love portrayed in the *Vita Nuova* marks an age of simple faith, undisturbed by any doubt. The *Convito* (so far as it was completed) records a period of philosophical speculation — not actually adverse to the truths of religion, but seeking to establish these rather on the basis of human reason than on revelation. Lastly, the *Commedia* shows us the soul, convinced that salvation and enlightenment are not to be found on this road, returning again to child-like submission. There is no doubt an attractive symmetry about this arrangement, but it is open to some objections, one of them being, as a French critic said, that part at least of the *Convito* must almost certainly have been written after the date in which Dante's conversion is represented as having taken place. Nor is it an answer to say that, the action of the *Commedia* being purely imaginary, we need pay no attention to dates. For one thing, Dante is extremely careful, and with more success than any one without his marvellous "visualising" power could hope for, to avoid anything like an anachronism in the *Commedia*. If he allows

no event, which, in the history of the world, was still future in 1300, to be referred to as past, why should he have allowed this in regard to events in the history of his own spiritual development?

The truth is, that all these elaborate and symmetrical theories prove too much; and what is worse, they all spring from an ignorance, or a neglect, of the great facts of human nature. The *Commedia* is, of course, full of expressions of contrition for former error; of frank recognition that the writer has gone astray in the past, and hopes to keep straight in the future. But might not any man, any thoughtful man at all events, of thirty-five years old and upwards, take Dante's words with perfect sincerity, as the expression of his own deepest thoughts? Why assume that the faults of which Dante repented with tears in the presence of Beatrice, were limited to a too great reliance on human reason, or to a secret leaning to the philosophy of Averroes? Were they not moral as well as intellectual? Whether the year 1300 really marked an epoch at which anything of the nature of what is now called "conversion" took place in Dante's mind, we cannot say. It pretty certainly corresponded with a decided revulsion in his political views. It cannot have been without a pang that he found himself obliged formally to break with the Guelf party, of which he had hitherto been a faithful member, and to cast in his lot with men whom he, doubtless, like those with whom he had all his life associated, regarded as a set of turbulent, overbearing swashbucklers, trying with the help of foreign men and money to reimpose a feudal tyranny on a prosperous and free commonwealth. For this is the aspect in which the Ghibelines must have presented themselves to a Florentine burgher of the year 1300. No doubt the doings of the Black party would have taught him that overbearing and tyrannical ways, turbulence and swagger were not the monopoly of one side, and that the freedom and peace of Florence must, in any case, soon be things of the past. All the foundations of the earth must have seemed to him to be out of course, and we can well imagine that his thought may have been driven inward, and he may thus have come to recognise how far the school which he had followed, and the path upon which he had walked — not in philosophy only, but in all matters of conduct — had led him from the ideals of his early manhood and from the way of God. Thus he would naturally refer the vision, which, of course, contains an allegorical account of all this change or "conversion," if we may call it so, to that year the events of which had given the first impulse to it.

It is not, however, necessary to suppose that with Dante, any more than with most men of a similar age, a conviction that he had hitherto been on the wrong track involved an entire break with former habits, at all events of mind and thought. He may very well have gone on stringing together the curious medley

of learning which he had not unfitly called a “Banquet.” As we have said already, it looks very like the contents of a commonplace book, in which materials for other works — notably for the *Commedia* — were collected. Many of the views enunciated in it may well be those held by Dante long before, and subsequently changed, though he might not have taken the trouble to expunge them, even when stating a maturer opinion in a later work.

A good many of the difficulties which arise in the consideration of the dates of Dante’s works, probably arise from oblivion of the fact that “publication” in our modern sense did not exist in those days. An author would no doubt give his manuscript to friends to read, as he went along; and, if they liked it, they would probably take a copy of so much as they had. Thus portions of a book would get about long before the whole was finished; and in this way the views which Dante expresses in the *Convito* upon the cause of the markings in the moon, the order of the angelic hierarchies, the nature of the Milky Way, and similar matters, may well have been known to many as held by him, and he may have known that this was the case. Subsequently, having changed his mind — it may be, even before 1300 — he would take the opportunity of a part of the *Commedia* having got into circulation, to recant; and even so the original view might stand in the *Convito,* and appear in that work when finally produced. When we further remember that Dante left the *Convito* little more than begun, and consequently, no doubt, unrevised, it will be clear that very little inference can be drawn as to its date, from the fact that certain opinions expressed in it are retracted in the *Commedia*. It would be truer to say that it had no date. It was first printed in 1490.

The *De Monarchia* is a complete treatise, in fact, probably the only work besides the *Commedia* which we can feel sure that we have in a form which it would have retained however long Dante might have lived. Enough has been already said as to its scope; it may suffice to add that the Church has never looked upon it with favour, which was probably the reason of its not being printed till 1559, and then in Germany.

The unfinished treatise known as *De Vulgari Eloquentia* had the curious fortune to appear in an Italian translation (1529) some fifty years before it was printed in its original Latin. It is a most interesting little work, showing considerable acuteness of perception in regard to peculiarities of local vernacular, and a general “feeling” for linguistic matters.

How do we know that all these works are Dante’s? it will be asked. Here we rest on unusually sure ground, for which once more we have to thank Villani.

In the Chapter to which we have already more than once referred, containing the notice of Dante's death, that historian gives a list of his works. "In his youth," we read —

"he made the book called *The New Life of Love*; and afterwards, when he was in exile, he made some twenty moral and amatory odes, very excellent; and, among others, he wrote three notable letters, one to the Government of Florence, lamenting his own exile without any fault; the second he sent to the Emperor Henry; the third to the Italian cardinals, when the vacancy occurred after the death of Pope Clement.... And he made the *Comedy*, wherein, in polished rhyme, and with great and subtle questions of morals, nature, and astrology, philosophy and theology ... he composed and treated in one hundred chapters, or chants, concerning the being and condition of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.... He also made the *Monarchy*, in which he treated of the duty of the Pope and of the Emperor. And he began a commentary on fourteen of the above-mentioned moral odes, in the vulgar tongue, which, through his death supervening, is only completed for three.... Also he made a little work which he calls *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, whereof he promises to make four books, but only two are extant, perhaps by reason of his speedy end; in which, in powerful and elegant style, and with fine arguments, he examines all the vernaculars of Italy."

The last two paragraphs, it should be said, do not occur in all manuscripts. But, assuming them to be genuine, it will be seen that we have here an almost contemporary notice, with one or two exceptions, of all the main works now contained in the editions of Dante. The chief exception is the curious little treatise on physical geography, called *De aqua et terra*, which purports to be a lecture delivered by Dante at Verona, in the last year of his life; but this is of very questionable genuineness. It was first printed, indeed, in 1508, but no manuscript of it is now known to exist.

Of the other works, Villani's notice may be regarded as clear proof that they are what they profess to be; and incidentally it may be said that his mention of them has probably been of great service. Literary morality was sufficiently lax in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and people's ideas as to the use that might legitimately be made of famous names differed considerably from those now in force. As it is, a good many compositions have passed under Dante's name, from an early date, which scarcely pretend to be genuine works of his. We can imagine what a temptation it would have been for some enterprising man of letters to complete the *Convito* or the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, or even to add a canto or two to the *Commedia*, if there had been no record in existence to let the world know where the genuine ended and the spurious began. Even this security,

however, is not quite sufficient to set us at our ease in the case of the letters. True, we have three letters purporting to be the three which Villani mentions, as well as several others passing under Dante's name; but it is, of course, possible that the very fact of his mentioning them may have sufficed to set ingenious scribes at work to produce them. Manuscripts of them are very few, and they occur in company with other works which are undoubted exercises of fancy.

On the other hand, more than one writer of the fifteenth century professes to have seen letters of Dante's, of which no trace can now be found. That referring to the battle of Campaldino, for which Leonardo Bruni vouches, has already been mentioned; and Flavius Blondus of Forlì, a historian about contemporary with Leonardo, speaks of others as extant in his time. These, if they could now be recovered, would be of the greatest interest, since they related to the obscure period immediately following the exile of the White party. Meanwhile the genuineness of the more important letters which we possess is perhaps the most interesting question which remains to be settled in connection with Dante's works.

Besides the prose letters, two poetical epistles are still extant, and these, strange to say, the most sceptical critics have so far allowed to pass unquestioned. There is something a little pathetic about their history. Two or three years before Dante's death, a young scholar of Bologna, known from his devotion to the great Latin bard, as Joannes de Virgilio, addressed an extremely prosaic, but highly complimentary, epistle to the old poet, urging him to write something in the more dignified language of antiquity. Dante replied in an "Eclogue," wherein, under Virgilian pastoral imagery, he playfully banters his correspondent, and says that he had better finish first the work he has in hand, namely the *Commedia*. One more communication on either side followed, and then Dante's death brought the verse-making to a close. In his own pieces one is struck rather by the melody of the rhythm and occasional dignity of the thought, than by the classical quality of the Latinity. But they are unquestionably remarkable specimens of Latin verse for an age previous to the revival of classical study, and, we should say, far more genial and more truly Virgilian in spirit than the most polished composition of the Humanists.

It is not intended here to enter into any analysis or estimate of Dante's prose works. The former task is one which readers should perform for themselves. Nor need they find it too much for their powers. With all his obscurity of allusion, and occasionally of phrase, Dante is not really a difficult author. From his teachers, the schoolmen, he had learnt to arrange his matter with due, perhaps more than due, regard to order and symmetry; and consequently the attentive

reader is seldom at a loss to know what part of the subject is, at any given place, under consideration.

Of the obscurity which results from over-elaboration of the thought, or from an attempt at originality of expression, Dante is, in his maturer works, singularly free. It must be remembered, too, that very often phrases which look to us like "conceits" are merely instances of the employment of scientific and technical terms now obsolete, but then familiar to every cultivated reader.

For æsthetic, or, as it has been unkindly called, "sign-post" criticism — that which, under the guise of directing the reader's taste, often seems intended to call attention mainly to the acuteness of the critic's own perception or his delicacy of phrase — the study of Dante would seem to be a very unpromising field. The sentimentalist and the elegant craftsman in words seem out of place in the company of this uncompromising seeker after realities, this relentless exposer of shams.

It is much better that the student should begin by understanding his author. When he has mastered the meaning, it will be time enough to begin to admire, whether it be the thought or the words, or the expression of the one through the other. For this reason we should strongly counsel beginners to read Dante himself first, and books about Dante afterwards. We would go so far as to say: at the first reading, dispense even with notes, and be content to look out the words in a dictionary. It is far better practice to find out for yourself where the difficulties lie, than to be told where to expect them. Similarly with the "beauties." These will reveal themselves *a ciascun' alma presa e gentil cuore*, and every reader will find them in such measure as he deserves. Then will be the time to use the commentaries to solve, so far as may be, the problems which have been discovered, and then to take up such works as Mr. Symonds's *Study of Dante*, Miss Rossetti's *Shadow of Dante*, and Dean Church's *Essay*. The student who, to a thorough knowledge of the poem, joins a careful perusal of these three works will find his knowledge co-ordinated, his grasp of Dante's whole system strengthened, his perception of Dante's greatness marvellously quickened. If he afterwards cares to pursue the subject further into the thickets of modern Italian and German criticism, he will find plenty of entertainment. Only let him remember that most of the minute details with which the excellent critics deal are not really of the very slightest importance.

As has been said above, there is ample reason for believing that the person to whom Dante refers under the name of Beatrice was a young lady of that name, daughter of one Folco Portinari, and wife to Simone de' Bardi. But suppose that irresistible evidence to the contrary could be found? Suppose that documents should come to light showing that no Beatrice Portinari ever lived — even that

there was no woman, young or old, in Florence, who bore the Christian name of Beatrice between 1200 and 1300, what would it matter? Do we read Andromache's

"Hector, but thou to me art father and mother and brother, and thou my gallant husband too;"

or Helen's

"Hector, dearest to me by far of all my brothers-in-law, it is now twenty years since I left my native land, but never yet have I heard from thee an ill or insulting word,"

with any the less emotion because we do not feel sure that Hector, or Andromache, or Helen ever lived on this earth? Some would add, or Homer; but so far, happily, no "separatist" has taken Dante in hand. But again, suppose he did, and with better success than has on the whole attended those who would have us believe that half a dozen or more men contributed to the *Iliad*, any one book of which would entitle its author to rank among the great poets of all time? The world would prove to be richer by as many great poets as could be shown to have collaborated in the writing of the *Commedia*; and how should we be the poorer? The poem would still be there, with all its power to soothe, to stimulate, to throw light upon the most hidden corners of the human soul, to reveal our own motives to us. It is, of course, only human nature to feel a personal interest in the man who has taught us so much; but we must not allow this natural sentiment to make us forget that the man is only interesting because of his work. After all, when the most destructive criticism has done its worst, we know much more about Dante than we know about the still greater Shakespeare; and let us be thankful for what knowledge we have.

APPENDIX I.

SOME HINTS TO BEGINNERS

Something has already been said as to the way in which the student of Dante should set to work in the way both of putting himself so far as possible at Dante's point of view with regard to earlier literature, and of availing himself of the various commentaries and treatises which subsequent writers have produced in such abundance; but it may be convenient to enter into this matter somewhat more in detail. It would obviously be too much to expect of every beginner that he should prepare himself for the study of Dante by a preliminary perusal of all the books which Dante may have read. But if he is to read with any profit, or indeed with any real enjoyment, some preliminary study is almost indispensable. Take, for instance, the historical standpoint. Some of Dante's grandest apostrophes fall flat to one who has not grasped the mediæval theory of the Roman Empire, as set forth in Mr. Bryce's well-known book or elsewhere. Much of his imagery, especially in the first Cantica, seems fantastic and arbitrary to one who is not familiar with Virgil's sixth *Æneid,* and does not realise that nearly every feature in the Dantesque Hell is developed, with assistance no doubt from mediæval legend, out of some hint of the Virgilian nether world. Of allusions to contemporaries it is hardly necessary to speak; and in many cases we must fall back on the commentators, who for their part have often nothing to tell us but what we have already gathered for ourselves. Cacciaguida's statement that no souls had been shown to Dante save those of people known to fame, may not be always true so far as any but the most strictly contemporary fame is concerned, but it is true in a great many cases. Few indeed there are whose names have not gained additional celebrity from Dante's mention of them; but, on the other hand, there are very few whose memory but for it would have perished altogether; and the thrill with which the reader comes across an old acquaintance, marked by the unfaltering hand for renown or infamy, as long as men shall read books on this earth, is far more satisfying than the process of looking a person up because he is some one in Dante. It is therefore at least worth while, if not essential, to know something of the minuter contemporary history, and those who can read the seventh, eighth, and ninth books of Villani's *Florentine History* — not yet, unfortunately, translated into English — will find their reward.

Those, again, who wish to place themselves as nearly as may be at the point from which Dante looked at ethical and metaphysical problems, will hardly be

satisfied with an occasional quotation from Aristotle or Aquinas. If, as may well be the case, they cannot spare the time for systematic reading of those somewhat exacting authors, they should at least be at the trouble of acquiring such a knowledge of their systems, and of the place which they hold in the widening of men's thoughts, as may be obtained from Ueberweg or some other approved history of philosophy. So for physical science and natural history, those who have not the leisure to read Aristotle (again), or Pliny, or Brunetto's *Trésor*, may get from the fourth book of Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences*, and from parts of Humboldt's *Cosmos*, some idea of the way in which Dante would regard the external world.

But one book, among all others, was undoubtedly the main instrument in the formation of Dante's mind and character. Few professed Churchmen have ever been so saturated with the language and the spirit of the Bible as this lay theologian. It was this, indeed, which seems to have specially impressed his contemporaries. "Theologus Dantes nullius dogmatis expers" is the title which the epitaph of his friend Joannes de Virgilio confers upon him in its opening line. And among all the books of the "Sacred Library," as an earlier age called it, we can see that two had a predominant place in his memory — the prophecy of Jeremiah and the Book of Psalms. In these two we may find the solution of some of his most obscure symbolism, and careful study of these will do perhaps more than anything to help the student to read with understanding. Of course those who read Latin should use the Vulgate rather than the English version, for the key to an allusion sometimes lies in a word or a phrase, the identity of which is lost in an alien language.

It is with the study of such books as these, carried as far as the student's opportunities will allow, that he will best prepare himself for that of the *Commedia*. The next thing will be to read it, either in a translation, or better, in the original, working rapidly through the poem, and noting difficulties which occur, but leaving them for the present. He will thus get a comprehensive view of its general structure and scope, and probably find himself enthralled by the spell; after which, to put it on the lowest ground, he will have a subject of interest to investigate which will last him his lifetime. At any rate he will pretty certainly resolve to go over the ground again, this time more deliberately. Now will come the turn of the commentators, including under this term not only the actual annotators of the text, but those who have in any way discussed, explained, or interpreted the whole poem or its parts, either from a general literary point of view, or in the attempt to clear up special points. Of these there is no lack. Probably no great writer has given occasion for so much writing on

the part of lesser men. The French critic Sainte-Beuve remarked that “to read Dante was almost inevitably to want to translate him;” it certainly seems as if to read Dante made the desire to write about him almost irresistible. Many of these books the world has pretty willingly let die; but a few will be read as long as Dante is studied in England. Foremost among these is the *Essay* by the late Dean of St. Paul’s, Dr. Church. This is printed in a volume with an excellent translation of the *De Monarchia*. As an introduction to Dante from every point of view, whether in connection with the history of his time or in regard to his place in literature, it remains unrivalled, and is likely to remain so until a writer on Dante arises equal to Dean Church in acuteness of historical insight, delicacy of literary taste, and a power of expression capable of translating those gifts into words. No student should fail to read it; and those who can buy a copy will not be likely to regret the outlay. Another instructive book is the late Miss Rossetti’s *Shadow of Dante*. It treats the poem rather in its religious than in its historical or philosophical aspect; and it is of especial value as an aid to understanding the often very perplexing symbolism. Long extracts are given from the versions by Mr. W. M. Rossetti (for the *Inferno*) and Mr. Longfellow (for the other parts); and these are linked together by a connecting summary. Mr. Symonds’s *Introduction to the Study of Dante* is also useful, especially from the literary point of view, but it is occasionally inaccurate. Of actual translations none is better than Cary’s, and this has most valuable notes.

These are some of the books from which a student, who did not feel equal to a preliminary study of Italian, might get information about Dante. It is to be hoped that there are not many who will stop here. When the genius of a poet is so closely involved as it is in Dante’s case with the genius of the language, it cannot be too strongly impressed upon the student’s mind that he ought to be read in his own words. Italian is the easiest to learn of all European languages, and the one in which the preliminary labour of learning grammatical rules is least required. Its grammar is very straightforward; its construction, in the best writers, is seldom involved; its words will in most cases be intelligible to people who know any Latin or French. The prepositions and their uses offer almost the only stumbling-block which cannot be surmounted by the aid of a pocket-dictionary; and even here the difficulty is more likely to be apparent in writing Italian. In reading, the context will usually be a guide to the meaning when the words are known.

The first thing will be to get a text. There are several modern texts published in Italy; but none of them are very correct. Giuliani’s is an attractive little book; but the Abate was a somewhat reckless emendator, and some of his readings are

very untrustworthy. The little pocket edition published by Barbèra contains Fraticelli's text, which suffers rather from lack of correction. Messrs. Longmans publish one based on Witte, but embodying the results of later inquiry. A complete text of Dante's entire works has lately been issued by the Clarendon Press, for the accuracy of which the name of its editor, Dr. Moore, is a sufficient guarantee. The "student's" editions with notes are those of Bianchi and Fraticelli, both in Italian. The latter is for some reason more popular in England, but the notes seem to me decidedly less helpful than those of Bianchi based on Costa's. Better than either is the *Vocabolario Dantesco* of Blanc. The original work was written in German, and no doubt is to be obtained in that language. It is really a very useful commentary, and has the additional advantage that it forms a pretty copious Concordance, and enables the student to compare the various uses of a word.

The student may now be supposed to be ready to set to work. How is he to proceed? This is a question very difficult to answer. Probably no two grown-up people will attack a new author, or a new language, in quite the same way. The present writer began Dante with very little knowledge of Italian; but knowing French and Latin pretty well. Being in Florence one day, he went to a bookstall and bought for one *lira* a secondhand copy of a little text published in 1811; and began to puzzle out bits here and there with the help of a small dictionary. In the following winter he went through the whole poem in Bianchi's edition with a friend, aided by various of the older commentaries. Then he took to reading the poem by a canto or two at a time, in bed, without notes or dictionary, and went through it two or three times in this way, at last beginning to feel that he would like to know something about it. Probably a course of this kind, spread in a rather desultory fashion over several years, would hardly suit every student. Nevertheless it has in its general features some merits. In the first place, the only way to learn is to find for yourself where the difficulties are; and this can be done most effectually by beginning with the minimum of help. With notes, there is always the temptation to look at the note first and the text afterwards: a process sure to result in slipshod and inaccurate knowledge. Take a canto at a time, and read it through. Go over the ground again with a commentary and perhaps a translation. Before long the difficulties arising merely from the language will be pretty well mastered, and progress will be more rapid. Above all, avoid in the first instance anything of the nature of æsthetic criticism. Be content to treat the poem, if it be not profane to say so, as a "grind." Translate into the plainest English, so only that you take pains to render every word. It is a very good exercise to keep to the same English word for the same Italian word. This will not be quite always possible; but on the whole it is wonderful how

many words in Italian (or any other language) have passed through the same change of signification as some one of their English equivalents. (Thus “sorry” in English means both “sad” and “contemptible.” You will find that Italian “*tristo*” bears both senses equally well.) Try to “explain Dante by Dante,” that is, look out for peculiar phrases and constructions which may occur more than once, and get at their meaning by comparison of contexts. One great advantage possessed by the student of Dante is that his author is practically the first in the language in point of time; and though later Italian poets used Dante freely as a quarry, they did not do it intelligently. It may safely be said that, with the occasional exception of Petrarch, no subsequent Italian poet threw the least light on the interpretation of a single word in Dante. Indeed our own Chaucer seems to have understood and appreciated Dante far better than did Dante’s countryman Ariosto. It is thus possible to read Dante without a very wide acquaintance with Italian literature in general.

Then, again, beginners need not be at too much pains to follow out the often very elaborate symbolism. On a first reading take the story as it stands. Let the dark wood and the three beasts, and the hill illuminated by the rising sun, remain what they profess to be, until you see the broad outlines of the poem. There are quite enough passages of purely human interest to occupy you at first. Francesca, Farinata, the Counts of Montefeltro, father and son, Ugolino, the assembled princes awaiting their time to enter Purgatory, the great panegyrics of St. Francis and St. Dominic, these and the like are the “purple patches” on which the beginner’s attention should be fixed.

The student who has gone through the poem on these lines will by the end of it be ripe for a more thorough reading and a fuller commentary. Among modern commentaries the fullest is that of Dr. Scartazzini. He is a guide whose judgement is perhaps not always quite equal to his erudition; but his Commentary (in four volumes, including the *Prolegomeni*) is almost indispensable to the advanced student. He has also published an abridgement in one volume. Those who read German should make acquaintance with the translation and notes of the late King John of Saxony, who wrote under the name of Philalethes, as well as with those of Dr. Witte. Both these deal fully with historical matters, “Philalethes” also going very fully into the theology. In the present writer’s edition some attempt is made to clear up obscure points of allegory, and to show the extent of Dante’s debt to Greek philosophy. Attention is also called to questions of grammar and philology, which have been somewhat neglected by the Italian and German commentators.

APPENDIX II.

DANTE'S USE OF CLASSICAL LITERATURE

A few words on the mythological and classical allusions in the *Commedia* may be useful to those who are not familiar with Greek and Latin literature. The subject is a very wide one, and Dante's treatment of heathen mythology is very curious. It is especially noticeable in the *Purgatory*, where every sin and its contrary virtue are illustrated by a pair of examples from Scripture history on the one hand, and Greek or Roman history or legend (for both seem alike to him) on the other. Sloth, for instance, is exemplified by the Israelites who "thought scorn" of the promised land, and the slothful followers of Æneas, who hung back from the conquest of Italy; while Mary going into the hill country with haste, and Cæsar dashing into Spain are the chosen models of prompt response to the call of duty. So, again, at the very outset of the poem, we find St. Paul and Æneas quoted as the two instances of living men who have been permitted to see the future world; and Dante professes his own unworthiness to be put on a level with them, apparently without a hint that he holds the *Æneid* any lower as an authority than the Epistle to the Corinthians. In a practically pagan humanist of the days of Leo X. this would hardly surprise us; but it is, at first sight, not a little astonishing in the case of a poet to whom the Christian Church and Christian revelation were vital truths. It is, however, clear that to the mediæval mind the Bible, though no doubt the highest authority, was in matters of morality, and to some extent even of theology, only "first among its peers." Aquinas quotes Aristotle, the Scriptures, and the Fathers almost indiscriminately in support of his positions. Dante, approaching the subject from a political as well as a moral point, takes for his guide and philosopher the poet Virgil, who, as the Middle Ages deemed, had both foretold the glories of the Church, and sung of the first origin of the Empire. It must never be forgotten that, to Dante, Church and Empire were merely two aspects of one Divine institution. Brutus and Cassius are hardly less guilty than Judas; and that simply from the official point of view, for there is no attempt to sanctify, much less to deify, Cæsar as an individual. None the less is the work that he did holy, and this holiness communicates itself, as readers of the *De Monarchia* will remember, to the whole of the long course of workings by which Divine Providence prepared the way for it. The finger of God is no less plainly to be seen in the victory of Æneas over Turnus or of the Romans over the Samnites than in the passage of the Israelites across the Red Sea, or the repulse of the Assyrians. Roman history is

no less sacred than Hebrew. This being so, we shall not be surprised to find that a certain authority attaches to the literature of either one of the chosen peoples. Did they conflict, doubtless the poet, as an orthodox Catholic, would admit that Virgil must give way to Isaiah; but he would in all probability decline to allow that they could conflict, at all events within the region common to them both. No doubt, just as Cæsar and Peter have, besides their common domain, functions peculiar to each, wherein Cæsar may not interfere with Peter, or as Aristotle may err when he trespasses on ground that the Church has made her province (for I interpret *Purg.* xxv. 63 as an allusion to Aristotle), so might Virgil or Lucan become a teacher of false doctrine if he ventured to teach theology. (Statius, who does teach theology, as in the passage just referred to, is, it must be remembered, a Christian.) But Virgil at all events holds scrupulously aloof from any over-stepping of his functions; and within his own limits his authority is infallible. Why, then, should we not accept his account of the infernal regions as trustworthy? He tells us that Charon is the ferryman who carries the souls across to the nether world; Minos the judge who sentences them; Pluto (whom we confuse perhaps a little with Plutus) a great personage in those regions. Furies sit over the inner gate; Gorgons and Harpies play their parts. Holy Scripture has nothing to say against these conceptions; so there is nothing to prevent our accepting Virgil's account, and expanding it into mediæval precision and symmetry. Thus we have all the official hierarchy of hell ready provided. As has already been observed, it is not until Dante reaches a point very far down that anything like what we may call the Christian devil appears. Throughout the upper circles the work, whether of tormenting or merely of guarding, is performed exclusively by beings taken from classic mythology. If we except the Giants, who seem to occupy a kind of intermediate position between prisoner and gaoler, Geryon is the last of these whom we meet; and him Dante has practically transformed into a being of his own invention: for there is little in common between the personage slain by Hercules and the strange monster with the face of a just man and the tail of a venomous scorpion. As might perhaps be expected when there was plenty of material to hand in Tuscany, less use is made of the persons of classical mythology in finding subjects for punishment. Among the virtuous heathen several find their place; but it may be doubted whether Electra or Orpheus were to Dante any less historical than Plato or Seneca. Semiramis, Dido, Achilles, again, would all be recorded in the histories of Orosius and others whom Dante read, with dates and possibly portraits. Capaneus, one of the "Seven against Thebes," is more nearly mythological; but as the utterer of the earliest profession of reasoned atheism he could hardly be omitted as the typical blasphemer. The most curious example of all is the Thais

whom we find among the flatterers. She does not attain even to the dignity of a myth, being only a character in a play of Terence, and borrowed by Dante from Cicero; probably the strangest instance on record of the “realization” of a dramatic personage.

THE END

Dante’s tomb at Ravenna – the poet’s supposed final resting place

Bas-relief of Dante on the tomb